



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

THE ENGLISH STUDIO LTD

Full Name of College	The English Studio Ltd
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Telephone Number	02072423784
Email Address	phil@englishstudio
Principal	Mr Philip Barnett
Proprietor	Mr Philip Barnett and Ms Mairead Fanning
Age Range	16 +
Total Number of students	911
Numbers by Age and type of study	16-18: 10
	19+: 901
	EFL only: 911
Inspection dates	29 November - 1 December 2011

PREFACE

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

The ISI is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the UK Border Agency to inspect privately funded further education colleges in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and English language colleges.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Standards for private colleges;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations to colleges 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. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- 1.1 The English Studio was set up in 1997. It has grown from one centre based in Shepherds Bush to encompass two campuses made up of one site in Shepherds Bush and three sites in Holborn. The English Studio seeks to provide low cost English courses while at same time providing a meaningful learning experience and a high standard of customer care.
- 1.2 The School was accredited by the British Council in 2003 and was re-accredited after its re-inspection in June 2011.
- 1.3 Before 2010 the school operated as one company but after 2010 it was split into two, making a clearer distinction between Tier 4 and non-Tier 4 students. English Studio Visas Ltd was set up to deal with Tier 4 students and English Studio Ltd to deal with students outside the Tier 4 system. The classes and management structure are the same for both companies. However, they have separate accounts and separate ownership.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, a total of 911 students were at the school with approximately half male and half female. Students' main countries of origin were Spain, Italy, Brazil, Turkey, Japan, Ukraine, Russia and Algeria. The school did not identify any students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.5 The school offers English as a foreign language (EFL) courses on which students can enrol continuously. Students are able to enter English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) examinations offered by the University of Cambridge. The school also runs teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) courses monthly. These are validated by Trinity College London.
- 1.6 The minimum age for students on EFL courses is 16, though a summer school caters for students aged between 12 and 17 years. All students come from countries where English is not the first language.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE

2.(a) Executive Summary

	Section of the Standards	Grade awarded 1-4
3.	The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievement	2 Meets expectations
4.	Students' welfare, including health and safety	2 Meets expectations
5.	The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	2 Meets expectations

- 2.1 The school's aims are well met by the range of English qualifications offered, which successfully meet the aspirations of their students. It delivers a high level of educational provision supported by appropriate policies. Initial and diagnostic assessment of students is good, and as a result students are selected for the right course to meet their needs. Most teaching is good and students learn and make progress. Qualification achievement rates are satisfactory. Teachers ensure that students are engaged and motivated by frequent changes of activity which effectively supports students' progress in their speaking, listening and writing development. Student work is monitored systematically and feedback to students is constructive. Students have an important opportunity to reflect upon their own learning during the tutorials where their progress is monitored. The procedures for identifying and supporting students with particular learning needs are limited.
- 2.2 The school buildings and residential accommodation are fit for purpose and maintained with regard to the health and safety of the staff and students. The school has satisfactory health and safety policies and procedures and implements them appropriately. The school has a good level of fire safety which conforms to legal requirements. Student registration and attendance records are very well managed and attendance monitoring procedures are exemplary. Students' pastoral needs are well met by the support provided by the school. Students report that relationships at the school are positive, and it is clear that staff care about the students and their welfare. However, the safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 need improvement, as not all staff have appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or have received safeguarding training.
- 2.3 The school is well managed and provides clear educational direction. This is reflected in the quality of education and the care of the students. Academic managers have a very good relationship with teachers and provide them with excellent support. Aspects of quality assurance are good. The formal observation system is rigorous and gives very detailed, helpful written feedback to the teachers on the quality of teaching and learning. Monthly questionnaires collect feedback from students which are used to identify priorities. However, better use could be made of the accurate self-evaluation report for action planning to secure improvement. Much accurate data is collected in the students' record system but limited use is made of this information for monitoring, management reporting and target setting. Students' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires were mainly good. The school has reliable arrangements for staff recruitment. Complaints are handled appropriately.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with standards for Private Colleges

2.4 At the time of the inspection, the college met all the key requirements of the standards for private further education colleges and quality is good. **The college meets expectations for the quality of education.**

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve students' attainment by ensuring they are ready to take examinations and by monitoring individual achievement goals for those on non-examined courses.
2. Improve teaching by supporting inexperienced teachers and identifying and supporting students with particular learning needs.
3. Ensure all staff have enhanced CRB checks and are trained in safeguarding.
4. Ensure the self-evaluation process secures improvements by producing an action plan that is monitored regularly and involves all staff.
5. Improve quality assurance by using student achievement data and priorities identified in management reports to set annual targets.

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

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

- 3.1 The assessment of students prior to or on arrival is good. Students are assessed using a suitable online test before they arrive. These initial assessments enable students to be enrolled on an appropriate course. On their arrival students are given a variety of diagnostic assessments. This results in a prompt and accurate placement on to the correct course for their level of English and previous academic record.
- 3.2 Tutors use the results of these assessments effectively to plan for individual students' needs. All students agree that they are on the right course.
- 3.3 Advice and guidance is constructive and ensures the students choose the route that suits their needs. Students may choose to take a course with an examination or a parallel course without an examination. Guidance on progression opportunities is given by tutors in supportive individual student tutorials.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 A wide range of English courses is provided which meets students' needs well. The school plans for each student to improve English by ensuring the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are part of every course at every level. All the courses have either internal tests or external examinations with, for example, the University of Cambridge Examinations Board or IELTS. There is clear progression in line with the Common European Framework for the testing of English (CEF). The provision includes a business English course option. Conversation and special examinations classes are also offered. Courses are in accordance with those on the website.
- 3.5 Most students are interested in English to enhance employment possibilities and this range of provision caters fully for all students' needs. Many students say they achieve their identified learning needs and they feel that the courses offer extremely good value for money.
- 3.6 The school also offers a TESOL course for trainee teachers of English. Successful graduates from the course have been recruited as new staff. This has been a successful method of succession planning.
- 3.7 Students have an appropriate range of opportunities to explore London and English culture. Field trips are arranged for students, which include visits to museums and guided walks. The school arranges work experience for a few interested students through an agency.

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

- 3.8 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers use a range of activities and exemplary questioning to check and develop learning. Most teachers are very experienced. A minority of teaching is satisfactory. Most satisfactory lessons are delivered by teachers who are less experienced and still developing their teaching skills.
- 3.9 Lessons are well-planned and are informed effectively by continuous assessments. A well-established lesson planning procedure allows students to know in advance what

they will be taught. Students have the opportunity to contribute to this lesson planning process so their needs are met. Robust regular formal and informal assessments allow students to judge their own rate of progress. Weekly schemes of work are displayed on classroom walls, which the students find helpful.

- 3.10 Students are successfully engaged in learning and motivated by frequent changes of activity. Different learning styles are well-integrated into the lessons so that all students become involved. Teachers organise pair and group work effectively to support student progress in their speaking, listening and writing development. Opportunities are plentiful for students to interact, practise and consolidate new knowledge and skills. Students' grammar and pronunciation is corrected where necessary during the class. Students receive helpful feedback during lessons and this allows good progress in their learning.
- 3.11 Student work is monitored systematically and feedback to students is constructive. All four language skills are regularly assessed so students have a clear understanding of their current levels. Students have an important opportunity to reflect upon their own learning during the tutorials where their progress is monitored.
- 3.12 The use of learning resources is adequate. Students in examination classes use a wide variety of texts and exercises of a suitable level. Interactive whiteboards and audio materials are used to good effect in some lessons. Insufficient use is made of interactive resources and the internet. The school makes some computers available to students, but internet connections are not always reliable. However, they are adequate in supporting students with their learning outside their classes.
- 3.13 The procedures for identifying and supporting students with particular learning needs are insufficient. For instance, staff have little understanding of the needs of students with dyslexia.

3.(d) Progress and attainment

- 3.14 Students reach satisfactory levels of attainment. Students make good progress on their courses. However, examination results, although improving over time, need further improvement. Student retention rates meet expectations at 90 per cent on ESOL courses. They are good on TESOL courses at almost 100 per cent.
- 3.15 Students make good progress from their level of performance at the beginning of their courses. In class they demonstrate high standards of language skills. However, there is no procedure for monitoring the attainment of individual learning goals for those students who are not following examination routes.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises (in line with expectations of educational institutions)

- 4.1 The arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students and staff are effective and the premises are secure. The school operates over four separate sites, three of which are in close proximity to each other in central London. The fourth location is about 20 minutes away by underground train. These provide a good environment for international students who are able to take advantage of the social amenities offered by a central London location. All the premises are fit for purpose and are adequately maintained with regard to the health and safety of students and staff. Toilet facilities are adequate in number and are reasonably well maintained. The consistency of approach to health and safety policy and procedures across the four sites is good. Students report that they feel safe and secure when at the school.
- 4.2 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. These conform to legal requirements. An appropriate health and safety policy is in place with clearly allocated responsibilities supported by weekly and monthly checklists. Up-to-date general and fire risk assessments are carried out for all premises with clear follow-up actions. These are reviewed annually. Individual risk assessments are carried out for organised off-site activities. Trained fire marshals and first aiders are in place to cover the four premises as well as first aid kits and accident books. Fire action notices are appropriately displayed and fire exits are well signposted. Fire protection equipment is properly sited and regularly checked. Students and staff are made aware of their responsibilities in regard to health and safety at induction and use is made of induction health and safety checklists for staff. Regular fire drills are carried out which are well recorded.
- 4.3 Security arrangements at the four premises are adequate. CCTV coverage is in place at all four sites. Appropriate signing-in procedures are adhered to.
- 4.4 Proper provision is made for students who are ill or injured. Staff are responsive to individual needs. A disability policy is in place which provides for reasonable adjustments to be made where possible. Wheelchair users have no access to any part of the school. There are no such applicants this year.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.5 The registration and attendance procedures and records are excellent. Registration and attendance are very well managed. Attendance is accurately recorded on daily registers, which are entered in the student management database each evening by the teacher. This database is used very effectively to record attendance data. Central recording and monitoring of course completion rates are not done systematically. The database is not used to produce useful management information to feed into the quality improvement process.
- 4.6 Procedures for monitoring attendance and contacting students who miss a class are highly effective. Contact with students is made on a timely basis in line with the school's attendance policy. A clear policy on punctuality is in place with students arriving late for class being marked as absent. The policy is particularly clear with regard to the adverse impact of late arrival on students' attendance records. The policy is effectively implemented.

- 4.7 Procedures for reporting to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) are highly effective. The necessary reports are made to UKBA in a timely manner. Overall responsibility for monitoring attendance and making contact with UKBA is centralised.
- 4.8 There are fair and clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees, which are appropriately communicated.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.9 The arrangements for the pastoral support of students are good. Staff provide effective support and guidance to meet students' needs. Students report that they have access to accurate and useful information. They receive an appropriate induction on arrival. Information about pastoral welfare is displayed in classrooms and teachers are made aware of the school's pastoral policies as part of their induction. Students are aware of the welfare officers and approach them if needed. The provision of pastoral support is very well co-ordinated across the four sites and between the staff at each site. A central log is kept of welfare problems with suggested solutions. Relationships between staff and students and amongst the students themselves are strong and positive. They know each other well in their classes and socialise between their taught sessions. The responses from students to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that most students are positive with regard to the support they get from the school's staff. Most students think that the relationships at the school are positive and that teachers show concern for them as individuals. There were no significant concerns. The inspection findings confirmed this view of the school.
- 4.10 The student behaviour policy is communicated to students at induction. It includes detailed information about the school's commitment to diversity and equality with a clear set of values including a commitment to dealing with bullying and harassment. It sets out a comprehensive procedure for dealing with breaches of discipline by students culminating in expulsion from the school. No claims of bullying or harassment have been made.
- 4.11 Appropriate advice and guidance on further study and careers is provided as required. Students receive help with developing their curriculum vitae and with the completion of university or college entrance forms.

4.(d) Child protection

- 4.12 The safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 need improvement. An appropriate safeguarding policy is in place and contains action to be taken in the case of reported abuse. A designated senior member of staff is in charge of safeguarding arrangements. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and the parents of students under 18 years.
- 4.13 Staff have an awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues and there is an ethos of care for all students including those under 18 years. The school has plans to train all staff in safeguarding and to undertake CRB checks on all staff. However, not all staff are trained in safeguarding and CRB checks are not in place for all staff. A central log of CRB checks is maintained by the child protection officer. No students under 18 years are allowed on trips outside the school.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.14 Home-stay accommodation is managed effectively by an external agency. The agency is in discussion with ISI to ensure it meets all relevant national requirements. The agency makes inspection visits to home-stay accommodation and ensures that there are appropriate CRB checks in place for the carers. It also handles any complaints effectively.
- 4.15 The residential accommodation is adequate for physically able students. It is conveniently located with good transport links. Students comment that it is affordable. The communal kitchen is well appointed and clean and tidy. Adequate measures are in place for the security of the premises and to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. There is a caretaker on site and students feel safe. Most of the students who responded to this question in the pre-course questionnaire think that the residential accommodation is suitable and managed effectively. Inspection confirmed this view. There are no students under the age of 18 years staying in the residential accommodation.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 The proprietors provide clear educational direction, which is reflected in the quality of education and the care of the students. The company's development plan identifies actions for future development of their markets. The proprietors plan and monitor the school's budget appropriately. Relationships with the school's management are strong and there is close monitoring of operations and effective delegation of responsibilities.
- 5.2 The proprietors are effective in discharging their legal responsibilities. However, the safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 need improvement.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.3 Leadership and management are effective in providing high educational standards at all levels. The aims of the school are well communicated. Responsibilities are delegated appropriately, particularly those for supporting and improving teaching and learning which are implemented well.
- 5.4 The school has undertaken a self-evaluation. The inspection findings support most of the judgments in the self-evaluation report. It follows the inspection framework and includes key strengths and areas for development. However, it lacks a coherent quality improvement plan for the school. Staff have not been involved in the self-evaluation process.
- 5.5 Academic managers have a very good relationship with teachers. They provide excellent support through individual discussion and regular professional development events. Appropriate procedures are in place for staff appraisals in which individual staff development needs are identified. However, there are no targets set for improvement.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.6 Aspects of quality assurance are good. The formal observation system is rigorous and gives very detailed, helpful written feedback to the teachers on the quality of teaching and learning. A peer observation system is available but not many staff take this opportunity for self-development. Professional development activities focused upon teaching and learning are delivered every two weeks and the take up is good.
- 5.7 Student feedback is collected regularly through monthly questionnaires. This feedback is used well to make improvements. Students are informed of the school's responses to their feedback.
- 5.8 The complaints policy is implemented and managed well. Details of any complaint, and its resolution, are recorded.
- 5.9 Much accurate data is collected in the students' record system. Limited use is made of this information for monitoring, management reporting and target setting. For example, retention figures are not routinely calculated and used for improvement. There is no action plan from the self-evaluation report to secure improvement.

- 5.10 Students' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires are mostly good, showing that students agree they are on the right course. Inspectors agree with the students' responses. Students state that they would recommend this college to others.

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

- 5.11 Recruitment procedures for staff are satisfactory. Appropriate checks are made including staff qualifications and references but not all staff have enhanced CRB checks.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.12 The arrangements for the provision of information are good. The school's website and student handbooks provide useful information for students. However, there is no mention of safeguarding or the provision for students with learning needs or disabilities. The information provided to outside bodies is also good.
- 5.13 The school was extremely responsive in providing information for the inspection in a timely manner.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with teachers and students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the owners. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The responses of staff and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mrs Prue Amner	Lead Inspector
Mr Martin Eayrs	Team Inspector
Mr Gareth Chester Jones	Team Inspector
Mr John Rooney	Team Inspector