



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

EXTENDED MONITORING VISIT

EC BRISTOL

Full Name of College **EC Bristol**

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Centre Director Mr Tony Watt

Chief Executive Officer Mr Michael Xuereb

Age Range 10 years +

Total number of students 168

Numbers by age and type of study
Under 18: 13
18+: 155
EFL only: 168

Inspection date **9 April 2013**

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight Extended Monitoring Visits of private further education colleges and English language schools. The focus of the visit is to confirm that the quality standards reported at the last full inspection are being maintained.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the UK Border Agency to inspect privately funded further education colleges, including 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 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 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.

An extended monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the quality Standards for Educational Oversight. Inspectors will make judgements on progress against any Action Points and Recommendations made at that time. The inspection will not examine all other Standards in detail but will sample to confirm that previous Standards have been maintained and that there are no contrary indicators to those quality judgements. Inspectors will also consider the impact of any material change reported since the last inspection.

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1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 EC Bristol is a private English language school. It is part of the international EC group which has 17 schools in five countries. EC Bristol was established in 2010, with teaching starting in February 2011. The school is led by a newly appointed centre director. He is responsible to the director of operations for Europe, who reports to the group's board of directors. .
- 1.2 The group's mission is to help students to succeed in a global community, teaching English by fully immersing students in the language and culture of an English speaking country. The school is located in the centre of Bristol. It offers courses in general English, specialised English including business and academic English, and examination preparation.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 168 students attending the school, with similar numbers of male and female students. Approximately one third of students are from the European Union (EU) with the remainder from a range of countries including Turkey, Switzerland, Korea and Colombia. English is an additional language for all students. With the exception of a short junior school in the summer, students are aged 16 and upwards, with the large majority aged over 18. No student has currently been assessed as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Enrolment is continuous, with students joining courses throughout the year. Most students are recruited overseas through agents. Their suitability is checked through a centralised pre-course application process and interviews and tests on arrival.
- 1.4 This visit took the form of an extended monitoring visit as the school reported the following material changes since the first inspection: a change in the school's management through the appointment of a new centre director, and an expansion of the school's premises in order to accommodate a planned growth in student numbers. Consequently, the following sections of the inspection framework will be examined in detail: section four, students' welfare, including health and safety, and section five, the effectiveness of governance, leadership and management.
- 1.5 The school was first inspected on 11-13 April 2012; it was awarded the grade of exceeds expectations. The main action point and recommendation from the first inspection report is:
- Develop the free lesson programme to support students with particular learning needs

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The language school exceeds expectations.** At the previous inspection of 11-13 April 2012 the school was judged to exceed expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements are good. Most teaching is excellent. It is well planned and actively involves students. As a consequence students make good progress. Course provision is well planned and meets students' needs. It provides opportunities for progression to higher levels and examination courses. A programme of optional free lessons meets the additional needs of some students. Limited progress has been made against the recommendation from the last inspection, as there are no formal procedures for identifying and supporting students' additional learning needs. Student achievement is good and regular progress testing provides feedback on the progress being made. However, the assessment of written work is inconsistent and in some cases provides students with insufficient feedback.
- 2.3 Welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. A recent expansion of the premises has been planned and implemented very well, resulting in additional high quality facilities for staff and students, and the strengthening of security. Health and safety is very well managed. Admissions and attendance registers are accurate and attendance monitoring is thorough. This results in high attendance rates. Pastoral care is very good and is appreciated by students. The programme of tutorials for all students provides regular opportunities to discuss progress and concerns. However, tutorial records are inconsistent and many do not identify clear, specific student targets. Safeguarding of students in the school and in residential accommodation is thorough and well managed.
- 2.4 Governance, leadership and management are excellent. The recent appointment of a new centre director has been well planned, supported by a detailed induction programme. He has quickly become very familiar with the vision, educational direction and management approach of the school and the board of directors. The relationship between the school and the head office of the group is very strong. Monitoring of the school's performance is robust, and opportunities are encouraged for sharing good practice between different schools in the group. Communication between staff and managers is very effective, supported by a structured programme of meetings. Opportunities for teachers to share good practice related top teaching and learning are limited. The collection and analysis of student feedback is very thorough, and the school is responsive to this feedback. Data on the performance of individual students is collected systematically, but this is neither analysed nor used effectively in school self-evaluation.

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

- 3.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is good. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 3.2 The recommendation in this area from the last inspection report is:
- Develop the free lesson programme to support students with particular learning needs
- 3.3 Progress made against this recommendation is limited but satisfactory. The programme of optional free lessons has been expanded and is used regularly, providing the opportunity for extra practice in skills such as speaking or pronunciation. However, there is no systematic approach to identifying students with additional learning needs, and offering them appropriate support.
- 3.4 Teaching is very good and the majority of lessons are excellent. Teaching is paced to suit the level of each class, and teachers use well planned activities to ensure student involvement. Very effective use is made of the interactive whiteboards and lesson delivery is enthusiastic, enabling students to participate with enjoyment. Teachers check and correct students' errors and pronunciation sensitively. Consequently students are able to achieve the objectives of lessons. In a minority of less effective lessons students are given limited opportunities to participate, with the result that not all students fully benefit.
- 3.5 Course provision is very good. Courses are planned appropriately to match students' levels and needs. Students are able to progress to higher levels or on to examination courses. The range of electives and optional free lessons enables students to extend their experience and supports their progress.
- 3.6 Students' progress and attainment is good. All students take regular progress tests, and in most cases they make the progress expected of them. Progress results are discussed with students in tutorials. Their written work is also discussed, but the written feedback they receive is inconsistent and sometimes limited, with insufficient information on what students need to do to improve. There are regular tutorials, which students find helpful and supportive. However, tutorial records are not implemented consistently. In some cases information on progress is incomplete and many individual short-term targets are not sufficiently specific to allow students to plan their own progression.
- 3.7 In lessons observed, students demonstrated good subject knowledge and were able to offer relevant examples to illustrate their understanding of topics. The large majority of students complete their courses successfully. Many transfer to higher level courses and some extend their stay at the school to continue with their studies. However, there is little analysis of data on the progress students make on examination or non-examination courses. No systematic comparison is made between final examination results and students' initial placement and subsequent

progress test results. Consequently there is limited information on the progress students make.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 Since the previous inspection the school has enlarged its premises, moving into an additional floor in the building it occupies. This gives the opportunity to increase student numbers in the future. The expansion has been very well planned and implemented and provides additional, high quality accommodation. It has resulted in additional classrooms, a larger student communal area and a larger library, all of which are well designed and furnished. The opportunity has been taken to install interactive whiteboards into the new classrooms and also into the larger classrooms in the remainder of the building. This change has improved staff and student facilities and provides stronger security as the school is now the sole user of the premises.
- 4.3 Health and safety policies and procedures are clear, rigorous and implemented systematically. Premises are very good quality, well maintained and fit for purpose. Security is excellent. Health and safety is well managed. Risk assessments are regular and thorough; the risk assessment of off-site activities is outstanding. As a consequence, the school provides a safe and secure place to study and work.
- 4.4 Student admissions and attendance registers are accurate and attendance monitoring is good. Students are made aware of the need for high levels of attendance. As a result, attendance rates are high in most classes. However, the student database does not currently provide reports on attendance by course or over a period of time for use in monitoring the school's performance.
- 4.5 Pastoral care is excellent. When students arrive at the school, induction is very thorough. Students know who to go to if they need advice on personal or welfare issues and they report that their tutors are responsive and are available to discuss their progress. The social activities programme is well planned and enhances students' learning experience. The corporate social responsibility programme also enables students to experience aspects of British culture beyond the school, by volunteering for charity fundraising events.
- 4.6 Safeguarding policy and procedures are clear and compliant. Staff are aware of these procedures and their responsibilities. Staff responsible for safeguarding have completed appropriate safeguarding awareness training. All school staff and homestay families have Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) or Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. Students feel safe and secure in school and in their residential accommodation. They report that any problems with their accommodation are managed efficiently and solved swiftly and effectively. They have a clear understanding of safeguarding and anti-bullying policies and are confident that any problems they may have will be listened to by staff.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection a new centre director has been appointed. The overall management structure has remained unchanged, and the reporting responsibilities to the board of directors of the EC Group also remain the same. It is not yet possible to determine the full impact of this change, as the new centre director has only been in post for three weeks at the time of the inspection. The director is well qualified for the post and the EC Group has arranged a very thorough induction programme. As a result, he is well informed about the vision and educational direction of the group, and the monitoring and management mechanisms.
- 5.3 The relationship between the school and the board of directors is strong. Senior managers meet board representatives regularly, including the chief executive officer (CEO), and networking is encouraged to share good practice between staff in different centres. The CEO produces regular newsletters which are circulated to all staff which keeps them informed about the activities and plans of the directors.
- 5.4 Leadership and management are effective. The educational direction of the school is clear and is understood by all staff. Communication between staff and managers is good, with a structure of regular meetings for all staff. Staff report that they have opportunities to express their views on issues and that the school is responsive to their comments. Systems for lesson observations and performance reviews are well developed and provide staff with clear feedback and targets. Links between performance review and training, and teachers report that there are few opportunities to share good practice.
- 5.5 Aspects of quality assurance are good, with very effective systems for recording student feedback. This is used by the school in identifying priorities for improvement. Systems are in place for collecting and using data on the performance of individual students. However, insufficient use is made of this student performance data to report on the school's performance and to act as an evidence base for self-evaluation.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The language school has maintained the excellent standards found at the last inspection.

Suggestions for further improvement

In order to improve the excellent quality provided, the language school is advised to:

- Develop and implement a strategy for identifying and supporting students with additional learning needs.
- Improve the consistency of feedback on students' written work, providing students with constructive information on the progress they need to make.
- Ensure that tutorial records are fully and consistently completed, and identify specific learning targets for students.
- Strengthen self-evaluation and the monitoring of student progress by analysing and making more effective use of student performance data.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and staff and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, and attended registration sessions. The responses of staff and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the language school.

Inspectors

Mr Neil Haynes	Lead Inspector
Ms Lynne Heath	Team Inspector
Ms Janet King	Team Inspector
Ms Janet Simms	Team Inspector