



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

EXTENDED MONITORING VISIT

A2Z SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

A2Z School of English

Full Name of College **A2Z School of English**

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Proprietor Mr James Taylor

Age Range 16-53

Total number of students 250

Numbers by age and type of study Under 18: 6
18+: 244
EFL only: 250

Inspection date **10 Sep 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 The A2Z School of English consists of two private English language schools based in central Manchester and London respectively. The Manchester school opened in 2006 followed by the London centre in June 2012.
- 1.2 The school is a limited company and is owned by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) supported by three directors. Each centre is led by a senior management team and governed by the CEO. Registration and marketing is co-ordinated by head office in Manchester. The school offers a wide range of English language courses and examination preparation classes, and aims to provide high quality education in a safe and stimulating environment. Courses vary in length from one week to a year.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 250 students were on roll across both centres with the vast majority attending the Manchester school. A small minority of students are under 18. Students come from a wide range of cultures and countries with the great majority coming from Libya, Spain and Saudi Arabia. No students have been identified with special education needs or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 This inspection took the form of an extended monitoring visit as the Manchester school recently moved to new premises. Consequently section 4 of the Framework concerning student welfare, health and safety was inspected in detail.
- 1.5 The school was first inspected on 14th – 16th August 2012 when it failed to meet all the key standards and was found to need improvement. The main action points and recommendations from the previous report are:
 - Demonstrate that it has proper regard for and legal compliance with fire, first aid, health and safety and risk assessment for on and off-site activities.
 - Ensure that the school maintains an accurate attendance register.
 - Complete enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and training in safeguarding for all staff working with students under 18.
 - Improve the formal induction process to ensure all students understand key health and safety and safeguarding policies and procedures.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The language school meets expectations.** The previous inspection of 6th February 2013 was judged to meet expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The quality of education is good. The assessment of students either prior to or on arrival is appropriate and ensures that they are placed in classes suited to their level. A suitable variety of courses caters for different teaching and learning styles. Courses meet Home Office requirements where relevant. Teachers are highly skilled and dedicated so students benefit from a friendly, supportive atmosphere. However, in lessons observed teachers made little use of the learning resources available to them, so limiting opportunities for learning. Students are aware of their progress in general terms, but records do not provide sufficient information for progress to be measured against the student's starting point and expected rates of improvement.
- 2.3 The quality of welfare, including health and safety, is satisfactory. The recommendations in this section are mostly met. The school now demonstrates proper regard for, and legal compliance with, fire, health and safety including risk assessments; accurate attendance registers are now kept. Arrangements for recording and reporting absence meet Home Office requirements. However, the recommendation to improve the formal induction process to ensure all students understand key health and safety and safeguarding policies and procedures has not been met. Multi-lingual pastoral support helps students settle in swiftly; students feel secure and well cared for. Inspectors support this view.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. The recommendation to complete enhanced CRB (now Disclosure and Barring Service - DBS) checks and training in safeguarding for all staff working with students aged under-18 has been met. The school has engaged excellent teaching staff. However, staff appraisals, continued professional development as well as lesson observations and peer reviews need integrating into the system to ensure maximum benefit to students. The website although comprehensive, does not contain all the necessary information and requires updating.

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

- 3.1 The quality of curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is good. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 3.2 Assessment of students prior to, or at, arrival through written tests ensures their accurate placement on suitable courses. Course provision is good and appropriate for the ages and language abilities of the students. A varied activities programme offers good opportunities for social interaction and for practising language skills. A comprehensive website gives accurate information, advice and guidance which students can access prior to arrival. All courses on offer to Tier 4 students lead to qualifications which meet Home Office requirements.
- 3.3 The quality of teaching and learners' achievements is good. The majority of lessons are heavily teacher-led in accordance with the direct method course requirements. The majority of students who attended interviews expressed concern that they have little opportunity to question and check understanding in these classes. Inspectors support this view.
- 3.4 Teachers demonstrate a very high level of commitment and understanding of students' needs. Lessons are well-planned and the system of continuous enrolment is well-managed; students are seamlessly integrated into classes. In the most successful lessons teachers use a good range of activities to maintain the interest and engagement of students; all teaching is well-paced and all teachers have an excellent rapport with students. However, teachers miss opportunities to use the technological aids available to support learning.
- 3.5 Regular assessment, periodic tutorials and advancement to the next level ensure that students are aware of the progress they are making. Marking of work is timely, providing useful feedback on how to improve. However, progress against starting points cannot be accurately measured as there is insufficient recording of information
- 3.6 A very small minority of students sit external examinations; results are good. Attendance levels and punctuality are good.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is satisfactory. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this area from the last inspection report are:
- Demonstrate that it has proper regard for and legal compliance with fire, first aid, health and safety and risk assessment for on and off site activities.
 - Ensure that the school maintains an accurate attendance register.
 - Improve the formal induction process to ensure all students understand key health and safety and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- 4.3 Good progress has been made at both sites against the first recommendation. Policies and procedures are rigorous and demonstrate legal compliance. Dates are set for policy review by senior managers. Risk assessments for on- and off- site activities are thorough, ensuring that students are kept safe. Each site has sufficient trained first aiders and fire marshals.
- 4.4 Good progress has been made against the second recommendation. Recording of attendance is thorough and accurate records are maintained. Processes for reporting student absence to the Home office are effective at both sites.
- 4.5 Progress against the third recommendation is unsatisfactory. Although a good induction process and student handbook inform students in London of key health and safety and safeguarding policies and procedures, no such induction takes place in Manchester. A student handbook is available on request at reception but this does not include the required information.
- 4.6 The Manchester school recently moved to a new site thus generating an extended monitoring visit. As the move was effected at short notice, the premises have not yet been fully refurbished. Washroom facilities are in poor condition and there is a lack of work space and amenities for both students and staff; the sound insulation between some classrooms is unsatisfactory. Classrooms are, however, well-furnished and the premises are maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- 4.7 Pastoral support is effective; harmonious relationships exist between staff and students and among students themselves. Tutorials and multi-lingual staff provide further support.
- 4.8 Accurate and supportive careers advice is available on request from the academic manager to support students who wish to go on to further education. This information is also available on the website.
- 4.9 Arrangements for accommodation are well-managed and recorded. Families who host under 18 students are subject to the required checks.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 5.2 The recommendation in this area from the last inspection report is:
- Complete enhanced CRB checks and training in safe-guarding training for all staff working with students aged under 18.
- 5.3 Good progress has been made against the recommendation. All staff take the on-line safe-guard training, and the school carries out all the required checks on staff. Details and dates are duly recorded.
- 5.4 The leadership of the school provides good educational direction which is reflected in the quality of education. Communication between the proprietor and senior staff is good and there are regular meetings between the operations director and senior staff in school. The operations director also visits the London site monthly. A detailed development plan identifies ambitious targets for future growth.
- 5.5 The school is successful in recruiting highly-qualified and dedicated staff. A system exists for staff and peer observations; this is effective at the London site but is not presently operational in Manchester. There is no provision in Manchester for regular staff appraisals. In-house staff training takes place twice a term but very few opportunities exist for external development and training.
- 5.6 The website is informative but does not include examination results; some information is out-of-date.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Suggestions for further improvement

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

- Improve the formal induction process to ensure all students understand key health, safety and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Establish individual learning programmes for students so that progress can be measured against starting points and target outcomes and students know what they must do to make progress.
- Provide more opportunities for staff development through further training.
- Ensure that staff appraisals are regular and systematic.
- Ensure that training is given to allow teachers to make full use of the available technology in classrooms.
- Up-date the website and ensure it contains all the required information.

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 and with the governors, and attended registration sessions. The inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the language school.

Inspectors

Mrs Lynne Heath	Lead Inspector
Mr Martin Eayrs	Team Inspector
Mr Simon Patiniott	Team Inspector
Miss Eileen O'Gara	Team Inspector
Mr John Rooney	Team Inspector