



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

**MONITORING VISIT**

**BRITISH STUDY CENTRES LONDON**

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School Director	Mr James Baker
Proprietor	Mr Simon Cleaver
Age Range	18+
Total number of students	268
Numbers by age and type of study	Under 18: 10 18+: 258 EFL only: 268
Inspection date	<b>25 March 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight Monitoring Visits and 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 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.

A monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the 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.

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## 1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 British Study Centres (BSC) Schools of English is a group of private language schools teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to international students. It was founded in the 1930s by the grandfather of the current chairman. It remains a family company. The aim of the school is to provide a creative, rewarding and successful learning and working environment for students and staff.
- 1.2 The school in central London was the third of the group of four to be established, in 2004. It functions as the head office of the group. It shares its premises with West London College, a business school, also owned by BSC, which provides training to undergraduate and post-graduate levels. The other EFL schools are in Oxford, Brighton and Bournemouth. The group operates junior schools for students under 18 years of age during the Easter and summer holidays. The four centres collaborate on devising policies.
- 1.3 The school operates all year and experiences a large increase in numbers in the summer. Most students enrol on general English courses, which can be combined with elective courses in the afternoon. Examination, one-to-one and teacher methodology courses for overseas teachers are also provided. At the time of the inspection 268 students were enrolled. The minimum age is 16 years, with a majority between 18 and 25. Highest numbers of students are from Europe, Brazil, South Korea and Japan. A majority are female. There are currently six students on Tier 4 visas. Two students are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 The last monitoring visit took place on 11 March 2013. At that time the school was judged to meet expectations.
- 1.5 The recommendations from the previous report are:
  - Ensure consistently effective communications with peers in the organisation to support the sharing of best practice.
  - Implement a process of self-evaluation and quality improvement planning which considers the views of all staff.
  - Ensure staff are regularly appraised and that professional development activities are appropriately linked to development needs.
  - Update staff files to ensure they are complete.

## 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The language school meets expectations.** At the previous inspection of 11 March 2013 the language school was found to meet expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Initial assessment places students in appropriate classes. Courses, which meet Home Office requirements, allow students to progress to higher levels. They are aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Good teaching is characterised by interesting and motivating lessons where use of different resources has a positive impact on learning. Interactive whiteboards are not yet regularly used to enhance learning. Students are helped to become independent learners through support provided in the self-access centre. Comments given on marked work are helpful in allowing students to know what to do to improve. The completion of learning diaries helps students reflect on progress made and future areas for improvement. The on-line platform is used effectively by teachers to record and monitor information on progress. Levels of attainment are high.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. The premises are well maintained and provide access for wheelchair users. Fire safety precautions are in place to support the safety of staff and students. High levels of pastoral care are provided to ensure excellent support of students. Useful information in a pocket guide provided at induction helps students settle quickly. The varied social programme has a positive impact on students. Processes are in place for identifying students with SEND, although not all staff have received appropriate training to ensure appropriate support. Safeguarding arrangements are very good. All staff have been checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and have undertaken related training. Admissions and attendance records are accurate and there are appropriate procedures for reporting to the Home Office.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is good. Regular informal and formal communications within the school and across other schools in the group ensure staff are kept informed of developments and support the sharing of good practice. Self-evaluation is bringing about improvements to the business, although not all staff have direct input into it. A detailed staff survey provides useful information on staff views of the school. A great deal of feedback is obtained from students, but is not yet analysed to bring about improvements. An appropriate new system of annual appraisal is in place to support staff in their development. Points from teachers' development plans usefully inform professional development workshops. Staff files are comprehensive and well ordered. An up-to-date complaints log clearly indicates all details of complaints.

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

- 3.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 3.2 Initial assessment takes place prior to or on arrival. It accurately places students in classes. If necessary, the flexibility in the system allows students to change level of class. General English and skills classes, aligned to the CEFR, are offered at a range of levels. This allows students to change levels if necessary, and offers clear routes for progression, thus supporting language improvement. Courses offered meet Home Office requirements.
- 3.3 Teaching is good and teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Where teaching is particularly effective students are encouraged to work independently and co-operatively in groups and pairs. Lessons are well planned, stimulating and well paced, so engaging students. Students are appropriately challenged to achieve their full potential. Effective use of a variety of teaching and learning resources enhances the quality of lessons. The interactive whiteboards are not systematically exploited by teachers to provide higher levels of engagement. The well-stocked self-access centre has extended its opening hours to better meet student needs. It is successfully exploited to encourage independent learning.
- 3.4 Homework is set regularly and is marked in a timely manner. A marking scheme is consistently used to identify the type of error the student is making. Helpful comments are given to support the students to improve.
- 3.5 Progress and attainment are very good. Students reach acceptable levels of attainment based on their starting points and the lengths of their courses. They all complete a learning diary on a weekly basis. This supports reflection of progress made and encourages them to set targets for improvement. The process is helpful in allowing students to understand their strengths and areas for development. Information related to the regular tutorials, weekly tests and teacher comments on progress in class is uploaded systematically onto the online platform. The information is used by teachers to review progress and monitor targets. The system is new and is not yet sufficiently well accessed by students to allow them to always know the extent of their progress. The school records overall progress on a termly basis and analyses in detail individual progress where this is lower than expected. The analysis is helpful in supporting weaker students, but does not yet take place for all students. This limits understanding of termly progress made by all students. Results in public examinations are higher than national averages.

#### **4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 Health, safety and security of the premises are good. A comprehensive range of risk assessments and policies ensure the safety of staff and students in the school and off site. Fire drills take place regularly and the fire safety equipment is routinely tested. Staff are appropriately trained in fire safety. Clear signage ensures that staff and students know what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation. Senior staff take swift and appropriate action when matters relating to health and safety are brought to their attention.
- 4.3 The premises are maintained to a good standard and classrooms are modern and bright, enhancing learning. A lift provides access to the school, including for those with special needs.
- 4.4 Students with SEND self-identify prior to or at enrolment. This is checked at induction by trained teaching staff assessing written work. Students with SEND receive support in class based on the advice of trained staff. The inconsistency of staff awareness in respect of such students limits the effectiveness of support.
- 4.5 Safeguarding of students is very good. All staff have been checked for suitability through the DBS and have received appropriate training. Students under 18 are only allowed to participate in appropriate activities in the social programme. All those under 18 are met at induction by a dedicated welfare officer, who monitors their attendance daily.
- 4.6 Levels of pastoral support are excellent. Students feel confident in approaching members of staff if they have a problem. Induction is well supported by pre-course information, an on-line programme with information about the school and a handy pocket-sized student pack with information on London and the school. The social programme is varied and highly valued by students, who enjoy the many activities which allow them to maximise benefit from their time in the UK. A weekly reading club successfully provides support for the development of reading skills. A fortnightly job club is available for students who are seeking work experience. They receive guidance on writing applications and have mock interviews. This effectively places them in a strong position to find work locally.
- 4.7 Student admission and attendance registers are well maintained. Weekly checks of registers alert managers to any student with attendance under 85 per cent and appropriate action is taken. Students under 18 sign in every morning and are identified on the register. Prompt action is taken if they are absent. Appropriate procedures are in place for contact with the Home Office when necessary.
- 4.8 Students report positive relationships with each other and with the staff. This was confirmed in the pre-inspection questionnaire and in interviews with students. Inspectors agree.



## 5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is good. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 5.2 The recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report are:
- Ensure consistently effective communications with peers in the organisation to support the sharing of best practice
  - Implement a process of self-evaluation and quality improvement planning which considers the views of all staff
  - Ensure staff are regularly appraised and that professional development activities are appropriately linked to development needs
  - Update staff files to ensure they are complete.
- 5.3 Good progress has been made against the first recommendation. Regular meetings are held within the school and across the schools to allow different teams to keep abreast of developments. These meetings are formally minuted so all staff involved have a record of discussions. This helps support the sharing of good practice. Action points are highlighted but do not always include an identified timeframe or responsible person, so reducing opportunities to effectively monitor activity.
- 5.4 Satisfactory progress has been made against the second recommendation. A small minority of staff contributed directly to the self evaluation, which relies to a large extent on collated staff views from staff meetings. Effective action plans have been drawn up in response to self evaluation to ensure that improvements are monitored to support business development. Staff views are sought annually in a detailed and useful staff survey. Results are collated, but are not yet analysed or fed back to staff to secure improvements to the operation. This has given rise to dissatisfaction amongst a minority of staff.
- 5.5 Good progress has been made against the third recommendation. A regular appraisal system is in place. Documentation and procedures are still evolving to ensure consistency of approach for all staff. The content of workshops in the teachers' professional development programme is partially determined by needs identified in appraisal. This focus has had a positive impact in the classroom.
- 5.6 Good progress has been made against the fourth recommendation. Staff files are very well organised. A checklist ensures all relevant information is included and is easy to monitor. Procedures have been updated to include an induction checklist and to make sure that references are taken up prior to appointment. The records do not yet contain information on the small numbers of interns in the school.

- 5.7 Senior managers provide a clear educational direction and ensure that the provision is high quality. They are supportive of staff development and fund attendance at external training events. They also provide financial assistance to teachers to obtain higher level qualifications.
- 5.8 A substantial amount of student feedback is extremely well collated to give a clear overview of students' judgements on the quality of their experience in the school. However, it is not yet analysed to allow management to effectively focus on areas for improvement, nor to track trends over time. The school's students are covered by a suitable fee protection scheme to protect their fees in the unlikely event that the school is unable to continue operations due to insolvency or closure.
- 5.9 The complaints process is clear to students. Complaints are logged electronically and the log is kept up to date by the relevant managers. This logging is highly effective in that it identifies the nature of the complaint, the person responsible for monitoring the situation and action taken to arrive at a solution.

## 6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The language school has maintained the good quality found at the last inspection.

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

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

- Implement a system for collating and analysing all feedback data to inform quality improvements.
- Improve the on-line platform so that students understand their progress and to allow teachers to analyse the termly progress of all students.
- Implement a process of self-evaluation which considers the views of all staff in order to contribute to on-going improvement.
- Increase awareness of all staff of how to recognise signs of learning difficulties and how to provide appropriate support.
- Update staff files to include information on interns.

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with members of staff and students. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed.

### Inspectors

Ms Nicole la Hausse de Lalouvière	Lead Inspector
Mr Raymond Parker	Team Inspector
Ms Christine Powell	Team Inspector
Ms Sharon Weston	Team Inspector