



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

**MONITORING VISIT**

**ACCESS TO MUSIC**

**(Company Registration Number - 02749258)**

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Head of Quality and Student Services	Mr John Sikora
Proprietor	Mr. Adrian Armstrong
Age Range	18+
Total number of students	63
Numbers by age and type of study	18+      63 HE only    63
Inspection date	<b>1 March 2017</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 Access to Music (AtM) is an independent provider of music training and wider training in the creative music industry. Established in 1992, the college changed ownership in 2009 and became part of a limited company which is led by a board of three directors. The college operates nine centres across England. Each centre is led by a management team who undertake work on behalf of the whole college. The local management team is supported by the central management team. The college's aim is to develop student's creativity, intellect and vocational ambition through broad, relevant engagement with a music, and music-related, curriculum.
- 1.2 The Birmingham centre offers internally assessed degree courses in popular music performance and music business. Both courses are assessed internally and externally validated by Birmingham City University (BCU). Successful completion of either undergraduate course can lead to continued studies such as a Masters Degree. Teaching is conducted in classrooms, rehearsal rooms and recording studios. Within their Further Education (FE) provision the Birmingham centre also offers courses at Levels 1 to 4 in a range of music specialisms, including music performance, vocal artist, composition, digital music, music technology and music business
- 1.3 All HE students are enrolled on two-year accelerated degree courses commencing each September. Courses consist of a wide range of modular studies. Selection is based on an analysis of previous skills and an interview to establish suitability for the course. Applications also have to meet BCU degree entry requirements. International students are required to have achieved an overall International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6.0. There were no students identified as SEND during this inspection.

At the time of the inspection there were 63 students enrolled in HE courses at the Birmingham centre. The vast majority of students are in their early twenties. A small majority are male. There is an equal number of students enrolled across both courses. The vast majority of students are from the United Kingdom (UK); others are from a variety of European countries. There is one Tier 4 student.

- 1.4 The inspection took the form of a monitoring visit of HE provision at the Birmingham centre.
- 1.5 The college was previously inspected on 9 – 11 December 2014 when it met all Key Standards and the quality of education exceeded expectations. There were no recommendations from the previous report.

## 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations.** At the previous inspection of 9 – 11 December 2014 the college was found to exceed 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. Students receive a high quality educational experience with regard to their needs and career aspirations in line with the college aims. Courses meet the definition of an approved qualification for Tier 4 students, as set out in the Home Office guidance. Initial testing and selection is extremely thorough and results in accurate placement on courses. Students are offered very useful vocational experiences throughout their course. Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are highly qualified and very well networked in the music industry. Classes are very well planned. A wide range of challenging and engaging activities are used to successfully motivate students and inform them of how to improve. Resources in the college are of music industry standards and the college very successfully creates a realistic working environment, in which students learn effectively. Assessment of students is continual and extremely thorough. Students achieve very high standards against their starting point and during the length of their course.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. A comprehensive range of appropriate policies is effectively implemented to guard against fire and other hazards. Suitable first aid procedures are in place. The buildings are fit for purpose and very well equipped. Registration and attendance registers are accurately maintained and up-to-date. Appropriate procedures for reporting to the Home Office are strictly adhered to. Pastoral care is excellent. Students are highly satisfied with the care and support they receive. Career advice is outstanding.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. Leadership is outstanding. The board provides highly effective oversight and a high level of financial stability. They successfully provide a safe and caring environment in which students can flourish. A well defined and transparent management structure facilitates excellent communication throughout the college. Senior managers utilise this to successfully monitor how well the college functions. Accurate data is generated and effectively used to identify and meet college needs. Quality assurance is outstanding. Student feedback together with indicators from staff appraisal is used very well to plan for improvement. The complaints procedure is clear and familiar to all students. All appropriate checks are completed prior to the appointment of staff. The college website is user-friendly and contains accurate information regarding the college and courses.

### **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 testing of students is excellent and is used effectively to place students on the most suitable programme to meet their needs and career aspirations. One-to-one interviews facilitate the design of extremely individualised programmes. Information gained during these interviews is very well used to monitor progress in the early days of the course. Effective use of tutorials from the start of the course facilitates excellent feedback to students on how they are progressing and how they may improve. Students identified by the college as needing additional help receive appropriate support when needed. Consequently, all students make excellent progress.
- 3.3 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. The educational purpose of the college is successfully supported through a highly focussed curriculum and by excellent short and long-term planning. These materials are constantly updated so that they are effective in meeting the needs of all students. All courses are externally validated by BCU. Courses meet the definition of an approved qualification for Tier 4 students, as set out in the Home Office guidance.
- 3.4 The regular presentations from high profile personalities in the music industry and the opportunities offered to work in reputable companies in the industry provide invaluable experience for students so that they can learn and progress very well and have optimal access to sustainable employment.
- 3.5 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is outstanding and is instrumental in enabling students to make rapid progress according to their skills and abilities. Classes are very well planned and employ a variety of highly engaging activities and strategies to challenge and motivate students. Teachers are particularly well qualified in their music specialism and in pedagogic skills. Classes are student centred and consequently students are self-managed, self-directed learners.
- 3.6 Assessment of work is very well focussed, reliable and used very effectively to plan teaching and inform students how they can improve. Studios have industry standard equipment and are supported by appropriately qualified technical staff. Teachers use the well-equipped computer room very effectively to develop successful research skills in their students.
- 3.7 Students reach excellent levels of achievement based on their starting point and length of course.

#### **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 The college demonstrates proper regard for Health and Safety for all activities in and outside of the college. Industry standard health and safety practices are in place in the daily practice of the college and are firmly embedded in its ethos.
- 4.3 The college takes every precaution to protect against fire and other hazards. All legal requirements are met. The college promotes a culture of individual responsibility for keeping the environment safe for its users. Members of the college are very familiar with all relevant policies. Records of all drills, tests and checks are meticulously kept and any problems are followed up immediately with accurate records of the outcome. Appropriate first aid procedure is effectively implemented in the college. Students are very familiar with these procedures.
- 4.4 The buildings are well maintained and fit for purpose with regard to health and safety of all staff and students. The performance studios are very well soundproofed. Furniture and fittings are appropriately designed for their purpose and for the needs of the students.
- 4.5 Arrangements for student registration and attendance recording are excellent. All records are accurate and up-to-date. Attendance is closely monitored and absences are followed up promptly. There is an appropriate procedure in place to inform the Home Office of concerns regarding Tier 4 students.
- 4.6 Pastoral care is excellent. Students feel able to approach all members of staff with their personal and other concerns. They report high levels of satisfaction with the pastoral support they receive. In addition to the care provided by AtM, students have access to student services at BCU. Students particularly appreciate the level of input their student forum has into directing academic and other improvements in the college.
- 4.7 Career advice is outstanding and begins at the selection stage. Throughout their programme students are given current advice and information from working professionals. They are given every opportunity to experience working with high quality providers in the music industry. They are also given valuable opportunities to experience performing at high quality events both locally and nationally. The college emphasis on collaborative work between students on both degree courses effectively creates a very realistic working environment in which students can gain highly useful experience.



## **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 The leadership of AtM is outstanding. All board members have a strong background in HE; are very well informed regarding current trends in the music industry and are successfully networked within the industry. Consequently, the board is highly effective in supporting the ongoing work of the college and steering its future direction and financial stability. The board provides excellent educational direction as reflected in the quality of education, the care of students and the fulfilment of the college's aims and ethos. It is successful in recruiting, supporting and retaining highly qualified staff and effective in ensuring their suitability to work with students.
- 5.3 The highly transparent management structure facilitates clear and accurate communications throughout the centre. Cordial relationships exist between all sections of the college and working relationships between the senior management of the college and AtM head office are excellent. This supports the effective implementation of appropriate college policies.
- 5.4 Quality assurance is outstanding. A range of coordinated teams work collaboratively to effectively generate data from a range of sources. This data is very well used to identify college needs, to plan for improvement and to monitor any impact their decisions and initiatives have on teaching and learning. Students report that they are very pleased with the educational experience they receive and the level of input they have into directing improvements. A clear and fair complaints procedure is effectively communicated to students during induction.
- 5.5 Staff appraisal is thorough and used well to identify needs and support teacher development. The college is generous in the time it allows staff for personal continuing professional development and uses the acquired skills very effectively for the benefit of students. Staff appreciate the time given to develop their individual skills and see it as a way of strengthening their teaching.
- 5.6 Prior to confirmation of staff appointments, all appropriate checks are completed. References are taken up as a matter of course and prior professional history along with qualifications are confirmed. The college made available records of all checks completed in respect of staff who have worked at the college in the past three years. The single central register of appointments is very well maintained and up-to-date.
- 5.7 Accurate and detailed information on the college website is effective in enabling students to make well informed choices regarding their course of study. The college complied with all requests for information in connection with the inspection.

## **6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The college has maintained the excellent quality found at the last inspection.

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

There are no recommendations.

## 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 company directors. Inspectors witnessed attendance being registered during lessons. 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

Ms Mareve Kilbride-Newman	Lead Inspector
Ms Sue Martin	Team Inspector
Mr Tim Miller	Team Inspector
Ms Linda Ross	Team Inspector