



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

EXTENDED MONITORING VISIT

ABBAY ROAD TRAINING LIMITED T/A ABBAY ROAD INSTITUTE

(Company registration no. – 09201312)

Full Name **Abbey Road Training Limited t/a Abbey Road Institute**

Address Angel Studios, 311-312 Upper Street, London N1 2TU
Abbey Road Studios, 3 Abbey Road, London NW8 9AY

Parent\Company name Universal Music Group

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Email Address darren.suckling@abbeyroadinstitute.com

Website abbeyroadinstitute.co.uk

Principal Mr Darren Suckling

CEO Mr Luca Barassi

Age Range 18+

Total number of students 63

Numbers by age and type of study 18+: 63
FE only: 63

Inspection date **07 March 2023**

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 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.

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. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Abbey Road Institute (ARI) is the trading name of Abbey Road Training Limited, a private limited company with share capital incorporated in 2014. It is part of the Universal Music Group (UMG). It operates across two sites; Abbey Road Studios in St John's Wood and Angel Studios in Islington, where the majority of classes take place. The college aims to deliver a broad, 'hands-on' and 'cutting-edge' curriculum that prepares students for a unique career in the music industry. Oversight is provided by the board of five directors who provide industry experience and work closely with the college. The campus manager acts as the principal and provides day-to-day management. He is supported by the programme director and a small team of staff.
- 1.2 The college offers a full-time Advanced Diploma in Music Production and Sound Engineering, validated by NCFE, over 48 weeks commencing in February, June and October each year. Prospective students are assessed by a letter of application, curriculum vitae (CV) and a portfolio of four music productions they have produced. If they are successful at this stage, they are invited for an interview that includes a short performance, vocally or on their chosen musical instrument. Students who successfully complete this course can progress to the second year of a small range of audio BA (Hons) programmes at the University of West London.
- 1.3 A part-time, evening class in Advanced Diploma in Audio Post Production for Film and TV over 20 weeks is also available commencing in November annually. Enrolment for this course is by application and interview. ARI also offers a 4-day Song Production Masterclass and a 2-day Music Theory Fundamentals course at weekends, however these were not running at the time of inspection.
- 1.4 At the time of inspection, there were 63 students studying on advanced diplomas. The large majority are male and all are over the age of 18. Most students come from the UK. There are 11 students who have declared additional learning difficulties or disabilities. Five students are studying under Student visa arrangements. The college does not provide accommodation.
- 1.5 The college was previously inspected on 29-31 March 2022, when it exceeded expectations for the quality of education and the quality of education had been improved.
- 1.6 This monitoring visit has been extended due to a change of principal. For this reason, Section 5 of the Educational Oversight Framework will be looked at in detail.
- 1.7 The recommendations from the previous report are:
 - Ensure that all information held electronically is readily accessible.
 - Document the lesson observation scheme fully to contribute to appraisal.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college meets expectations.** At the previous inspection of 29-31 March 2022, the college was found to exceed expectations and, though the quality of education as judged at that time has not been maintained in all respects, the college meets expectations.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Assessment of students prior to and on arrival to the college is excellent. Courses are extremely well-matched to the ages, capabilities and aspirations of the students. All courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in Home Office guidance. Teachers use their high levels of industry experience to develop students' knowledge and practical skills extremely well. Consequently, students make excellent progress. Students benefit from excellent resources and facilities and use these effectively together to develop the skills needed for employment. In a minority of lessons, teachers use too many open questions and do not check the learning of all students so that the pace of the lesson is not always appropriate for all. Almost all students achieve their qualification and progress into relevant employment within the industry.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Arrangements for health and safety are highly effective. Students feel safe at the college. The premises are fit for purpose, secure and very well maintained. Resources and facilities are of extremely high quality. The college maintains highly accurate registration and attendance records. Absences are followed up promptly and processes are in place to make reports to the Home Office as required. Pastoral support for students is excellent. Students appreciate the excellent relationships between staff and students and a high level of personal support.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. Oversight of the college is satisfactory. The board of directors ensures sufficient investment in accommodation, staff and resources. Leaders and managers ensure that suitable policies are implemented to maintain a high standard of care and education for students. They fully discharge their duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of students. All legal permissions are met. However, they have not ensured that staff suitability checks and safer recruitment practices have been fully implemented. Quality assurance is good. However, staff appraisal is not fully documented and does not yet lead to the identification of training needs or precise targets for improvement. Staff recruitment and suitability checks are unsatisfactory. All appropriate checks are made on staff's identity and right to work in the UK. However, formal references are not taken up and verified prior to employment. Provision of information is good.

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 Assessment of students prior to and on arrival to the college is excellent. The college has a thorough process for assessing students prior to the course to confirm their suitability and identify any additional learning needs. They ensure that international students have the required level of English in order to successfully complete the course.
- 3.3 Course provision is excellent. The college provides a small range of courses tailored specifically to the needs of the students and the industry. These are in line with the college's stated aims and ethos and as described in their promotional materials. Courses are extremely well-matched to the ages, capabilities and aspirations of the students. Appropriate support and exam arrangements enables students with additional learning needs or disabilities to learn and succeed. All courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in Home Office guidance.
- 3.4 The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Lessons are well planned. Teachers have high levels of industry knowledge and expertise, which they use very effectively to develop students' practical skills and to prepare them for the demands of employment in music production and related fields. They make good use of high-quality materials and resources to illustrate complex ideas and help students understand new concepts in sound production. They provide challenging activities that keep students interested and use questioning to encourage students to think more deeply. Consequently, students make good or better progress in classes and develop in confidence.
- 3.5 Students are attentive and well-motivated. They work well independently and in small groups to complete project work, thus developing the knowledge and skills they will need in employment. Students benefit from excellent facilities and equipment on-site and at the Abbey Road Studios plus a range of visiting lecturers, which widens their knowledge and experience of the sector. Teaching promotes British Values though fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance and does not discriminate against students with any protected characteristics.
- 3.6 In a minority of lessons, teachers use too many open questions and do not check the learning of all students to ensure that the pace of the lesson is appropriate for all.
- 3.7 Students' progress and attainment is excellent. Students make excellent progress on their courses. Almost all students achieve the Advanced Diploma in Music Production and Sound Engineering and progress into relevant employment within the industry. A very small minority who fail an assessment need to repeat a term in order to succeed.

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 Health, safety and security of premises is excellent. Arrangements for health and safety are highly effective. Roles and responsibilities are clearly designated in the health and safety policy, which is appropriate and regularly updated. Students are well informed on how to keep themselves safe and students confirm they feel safe at all times. There is a clear written first aid policy which is effectively implemented. Very few accidents take place and these are all appropriately recorded. Students confirm they are able to make suggestions regarding safety and welfare issues and that these have been implemented.
- 4.3 The premises are fit for purpose, secure and very well maintained to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. Access to the college allows all students, including those with disabilities, to enter and leave the premises safely, including for emergency evacuations. Free drinking water is provided which contributes to students' health and well-being.
- 4.4 Student registration and attendance records are good. Admissions records and attendance registers are highly accurate. Attendance levels are high for the large majority of students. Highly effective processes ensure that students are contacted promptly if they fail to attend. The college has appropriate procedures in place to make the necessary reports to the Home Office when a student fails to enrol, discontinues study or does not fulfil the Home Office requirements for attendance.
- 4.5 Pastoral and personal support for students is excellent. Students meet regularly with their tutors to discuss their individual learning plans (ILP), which closely meet their educational support needs. Personal issues can also be discussed at these meetings. However, students can approach any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable for help. The college will direct students to appropriate external agencies for support on specific personal issues. Relationships between students and staff and students and students are excellent. Students find their relationship with teachers to be highly supportive. There are no recorded incidents of bullying or harassment. Students confirm they feel comfortable and safe in the learning environment.

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 recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report are:
- Ensure that all information held electronically is readily accessible.
 - Document the lesson observation scheme fully to contribute to appraisal.
- 5.3 The school has made good progress towards the first recommendation. All electronic information needed by staff is now held securely on a Cloud drive that is accessible to those who need, and have permission, to access it.
- 5.4 The school has made satisfactory progress towards the second recommendation. The peer observation process is now fully documented. However, although discussed in appraisal, the outcomes of lesson observations do not contribute to clear and measurable targets for improvement or formal identification of training needs.
- 5.5 Ownership and oversight of the school is satisfactory. Oversight of the college is satisfactory. There is an excellent working relationship between the senior managers and the board of directors who monitor key performance indicators carefully, evaluate the success of the college and set targets for improvement. Leaders and managers provide clear educational direction and ensure that the care and education provided for students reflects the college's stated aims and ethos. They provide sufficient investment in accommodation, staff and resources through robust financial management. Suitable policies are provided and regularly reviewed for effectiveness. All legal permissions are met. However, directors and senior managers have not ensured that staff suitability checks and safer recruitment practices have been fully implemented.
- 5.6 Management structures and responsibilities are good. Management roles and responsibilities are clear. Responsibility for the day to day running of the college is delegated to the campus manager who ensures that policies are implemented and ensures that the health, safety and welfare of staff and students are protected. Together with the programme director, he ensures that a high level of care and education for students is maintained. They ensure that highly experienced staff are recruited, supported and trained for their roles.
- 5.7 Quality assurance is good. The college has very detailed quality assurance processes, including the frequent gathering and analysis of student feedback, that are used effectively to make improvements to provision. Leaders and managers analyse student success data frequently, and in detail, to ensure consistency and address any concerns. Self-evaluation accurately identifies the strengths of the college and highlights areas for further improvement. The new campus manager has clear plans in place to address areas of weakness. A staff appraisal system is in place, which

encourages self-reflection. This is not fully documented and does not yet lead to the setting of precise objectives and targets for improvement or identify training needs. A clear and fair policy for complaints is in place, which includes provision for recording the outcomes. No formal complaints have been recorded to date. The policy includes provision for independent arbitration should a complaint be unresolved. A fee protection scheme is provided by the parent company UMG.

- 5.8 Staff recruitment and suitability checks are unsatisfactory. All appropriate checks are made on staff's identity and right to work in the UK prior to their appointment. Checks are made and recorded in order to confirm applicants' prior employment history through an external agency appointed by UMG. Most staff are recruited through personal recommendation and are known to existing staff at ARI, however, formal references are not taken up and verified prior to employment.
- 5.9 Provision of information is good. The college's website contains a wide range of information that is helpful to students and prospective students. Information requested was provided to the inspectors promptly to enable them to carry out the inspection.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The college has not maintained the excellent quality found at the last inspection.

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Ensure that references are taken up and verified prior to the confirmation of appointment for all staff.
- Revise the appraisal and lesson observation process so that it leads to clear and measurable targets for improvement and identifies training needs.
- Ensure that the learning of all students is thoroughly checked during lessons to ensure that the pace is appropriate for all.

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 a representative of the board of directors. 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 Angela Moir	Lead Inspector
Mr John Rooney	Team Inspector