



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

**ABC SCHOOL OF ENGLISH**

Full Name of College **ABC School of English**

Address: 63 Neal Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2H 9PJ

Telephone Number: 020 7836 8999

Email Address: sue@abcschool.co.uk

Principal Ms Sue Rao

Proprietors Ms Sue Rao

Ms Bozena Grzelak

Age Range 16+

Total Number of students 62

Numbers by age and type 16+: 62

of study EFL only: 62

Inspection dates: **4 – 6 September 2012**

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language colleges. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the college's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the UK Border Agency to inspect privately funded further education colleges in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and English language colleges.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published 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.

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(a) Executive summary</b>	3
<b>(b) Action points</b>	4
(i) Compliance with standards	4
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	4
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
(a) Assessment of learners prior to or on arrival	5
(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum	5
(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning	6
(d) Attainment and progress	6
<b>4 STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>	<b>8</b>
(a) Health, safety and security of premises	8
(b) Student registration and attendance records	8
(c) Pastoral support for students	8
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
(a) Ownership and oversight	10
(b) Management structures and responsibilities	10
(c) Quality assurance including student feedback	11
(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks	11
(e) Provision of information	12
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>13</b>

## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE**

- 1.1 The ABC School of English was established in March 2002. Its stated aim is to deliver quality English tuition in a personal, friendly, caring and positive environment. The school is located in London's Covent Garden and has been at its current premises since its formation. It is owned and operated by the original two directors who founded the school.
- 1.2 At the time of inspection there were 62 students, none of whom were under the age of 18. Students are able to enrol at any time on courses lasting between a few days and a year. Students are able to start with no English language ability and as such there is no selection process, although initial assessments help ensure that students are placed in an appropriate class.
- 1.3 Most of the students are from Europe and therefore do not require visas. At the time of inspection two students were studying on Tier 4 visas. No students were identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 Students are able to choose between general English lessons and a direct method of English tuition known as the Callan method. Eight students are registered on the general English course and 54 attend direct method classes. Sixty per cent of students are female. The majority of students are from Italy and Spain, with these two groups making up approximately 60 per cent of the total student population. Other students are from France, Germany Turkey, Brazil, Japan and China. All students have English as a foreign language.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE

### 2.(a) Executive Summary

	Section of the Standards	Grade awarded 1-4
3.	The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievement	2 Meets expectations
4.	Students' welfare, including health and safety	2 Meets expectations
5.	The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	2 Meets expectations

- 2.1 The school provides a good quality curriculum which effectively meets the needs of its students. The provision is wide ranging and flexible in order to meet the needs of both long and short-stay students. All make good progress in the development of spoken and written English. Accurate information on each student, gathered before and during enrolment, is used well in general English classes to tailor learning to meet individual learners' needs. Teaching methods, whilst very effective, are teacher dominated and do not involve students in activities. Personal tutorials are in place for students staying longer than eight weeks, but are not routinely available for those on shorter courses.
- 2.2 The health, safety and welfare of students meet expectations. Accommodation is maintained appropriately, with regular checks and systems to reduce risks from fire and other hazards. First-aid procedures are clear and students know what to do if they feel unwell or need support with personal or accommodation issues. Records of attendance are meticulously kept. Appropriate contact is maintained with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) for the few students on Tier 4 visas. Relationships between staff and students are very good. A comprehensive programme of well-attended social and cultural activities is provided for students. The school has a very diverse student base and positively promotes integration of languages and cultures, with appropriate measures in place to prevent bullying and harassment. There have been no recorded instances of bullying or harassment at the school. The induction process introduces students to the academic process well, but does not give enough general information on life in London.
- 2.3 Leadership, governance and management are effective and meet expectations. Clear responsibilities for the various functions of the school, including curriculum development, health, safety and student welfare, are shared amongst senior managers, who provide good oversight in both the strategic direction of the school and its day-to-day activities. Procedures to help ensure the well-being of all students, including those under the age of 18, are robust and clearly understood by all involved. Premises are secure and safe. The self-evaluation provided in preparation for the inspection was overly descriptive and did not accurately identify key strengths and weaknesses of the provision and there was no improvement plan. Frequent surveys gather opinions of the students and staff, but in the case of student

surveys not enough feedback on the day-to-day running of the school is requested. The school benefits from low turnover of high quality staff who are rigorously checked to ensure they are able to work in the UK, are competent teachers and are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Complaints are rare and dealt with promptly and effectively when they do arise, although there is currently no provision for external adjudication by an independent person.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with standards for Private Colleges**

2.4 At the time of the inspection, the college met all the key requirements of the standards for private further education colleges and quality is good. **The college meets expectations for the quality of education.**

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Instigate more one-to-one discussions with shorter stay students so that their progress can be measured and discussed.
2. Formalise the induction process to include more information about life in London.
3. Use student survey questions to elicit more useful information on the day-to-day running of the school.
4. Develop a well-constructed and more self-critical self-evaluation process to include a quality improvement plan.
5. Appoint an external independent person to arbitrate on complaints.

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

#### **3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival**

- 3.1 The assessment of students prior to or on arrival meets expectations. Students are interviewed either in person or using online video messenger if overseas. All students take a test on arrival to assess their level of English before being allocated an appropriate class. The school offers twelve levels of study in the direct method of English tuition. For general English there is one class offering intermediate to advanced level. Students in classes during the inspection were judged to be studying at the right level for their ability.
- 3.2 The results of initial assessment are generally used well. Teachers of students in general English classes receive details of initial assessment results and free writing scripts. Teachers use assessment information to effectively personalise learning for students in general English and to accurately place students studying using the direct method in the appropriate class.
- 3.3 Students are well informed on the methods of teaching and on the school in general. Information is clear and well publicised in a useful handbook and on the school website. All students are entitled to trial lessons and many take the opportunity to do these before starting at the school.

#### **3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum**

- 3.4 The suitability of course provision meets expectations. The school clearly explains its purpose and teaching methods to all prospective students through marketing materials and on its website. Many choose to enrol at the school because of the small class sizes and high levels of personal attention as described in the school's mission statement. The overall standard of education is good and the school benefits from positive feedback, repeat business and many recommendations.
- 3.5 Courses are well matched to students' short and long-term needs. The school's methods allow for rapid development of conversational English and are particularly suitable for low to intermediate level speakers. Most students attend the school in order to improve their general conversational English with employment in their home country in mind. Those of higher ability are guided toward general English where they are able to refine their language skills in different contexts. A part-time academic coordinator for the general English course attends regularly and plays an active role in the development of the general English provision.
- 3.6 The prospectus is clear and accurately details the provision and course costs. Courses range between a few days in duration for short-stay tourists to longer courses of up to a year. The two programmes on offer allow students to make choices according to their styles of learning and overall aims. Students are well informed about their progression on completion of the course and appreciate the



comparative advantages and disadvantages of the method used. Students often choose this direct method for its emphasis on speaking and listening rather than traditional grammar.

- 3.7 Progression routes through the levels are clear and the overwhelming majority of students progress well through levels during their time at the school. Retention rates are very high on all courses and the organisation of classes is flexible, allowing students to change class levels easily. The school provides the opportunity for students to combine traditional and direct methods at upper and intermediate level. Students may take external examinations, including the Cambridge certificate and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), although few have done so.

### **3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning**

- 3.8 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are highly skilled in delivering the differing methods of tuition used by the school. Students make good progress in speaking English and demonstrate this frequently in lessons, which are focussed, energetic and dynamic. All lessons are well planned with clearly stated outcomes. Delivery is intensive, making good use of the time available. All students participate well and demonstrate their progress through question and answer sessions. In some classes, students respond to questions with little prompting and develop their answers into longer explanations and descriptions. A small number of students, however, whilst making good progress, find the method employed in lessons impersonal.
- 3.9 Highly effective use is made of on-going assessment in lessons. This helps ensure all students make progress in developing oral language skills, particularly pronunciation and avoidance of grammatical errors. Students progress well between levels and the improvement in language skills is evident over time. Students take regular assessments to measure progress and longer stay students are given guidance on how to improve in tutorials.
- 3.10 Resources are adequate and meet expectations. Rooms safely accommodate students and contain all the resources necessary to deliver lessons. Students receive high quality learning materials, although there are no computers for students to use or social or dining facilities at the school. The school asks students to self-declare any learning difficulties and provides support where appropriate.

### **3.(d) Attainment and progress**

- 3.11 Students make good progress during their time at the school. Those on general English achieve well on externally set examinations. Those on direct method courses progress well through the levels and often move on to more specific courses, for example courses involving business or hospitality. In interviews students communicated confidently, expressing satisfaction with their progress, particularly in speaking and listening. Inspectors were able to validate the rapid progression in language ability by examining students' earlier work.

- 3.12 The programme is organised so that students can discuss their progress every eight weeks, which means tutorials are not routinely carried out for shorter-stay students. Tutorials are available to all students on request, but this is not sufficiently promoted and many shorter-stay students do not discuss their actual progress and compare it with their original goals and longer-term aspirations.

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

### **4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises (in line with expectations of educational institutions)**

- 4.1 Arrangements for health, safety and welfare are good. Procedures for evacuation in the event of a fire are clear and well understood by students and staff. Documents outlining staff responsibilities to escort students to the meeting point and to take registers are clear. Teachers sign to confirm they have understood fire procedures and have passed information onto students. Clear records of fire drills and tests are kept and there are adequate washrooms for the numbers of students.
- 4.2 Fire alarms are regularly maintained, with external checks carried out twice a year and fire extinguishers serviced annually. Clear signs indicate fire exits and emergency lighting is installed at key points on each floor. There is a detailed fire risk assessment for each room, which is updated annually. Some short-stay students do not benefit from hearing a test alarm as tests take place only every three months, although all are clear on safe evacuation from the building. One of the directors is first-aid trained. A record is kept of accidents and actions taken. A well-stocked first-aid box is centrally located in the building. Clear procedures describe what to do if students are taken ill.
- 4.3 The school makes every effort to accommodate students of all abilities and backgrounds. However, the premises are not accessible for wheelchair users or those with more profound mobility difficulties. Information on access to the premises is made clear in marketing materials and staff work closely with other schools to refer students who may not be able to access facilities at the school.

### **4.(b) Student registration and attendance record**

- 4.4 The school has a fair and well-publicised policy on fees and refunds. Students often arrange short courses in order to sample the teaching method and environment at the school. Most then increase their length of stay.
- 4.5 Appropriate attendance monitoring is in place. Teachers take registers in every lesson and complete another document later so that attendance is double-checked. Managers add attendance information to a database every two hours to analyse attendance patterns over time. Automatic alerts highlight poor attendance or lack of punctuality and students are contacted by email or phone if absent. There is full compliance with UKBA regulations for Tier 4 students, although as yet no student has needed to be reported. Punctuality is taken very seriously and students who are more than 15 minutes late are not allowed to enter classes.

### **4.(c) Pastoral support for students**

- 4.6 Staff provide effective support and guidance in accordance with the needs of the students and the school's aims. The reception area is at the centre of school life. It is where students go for support and where many activities are publicised and co-

ordinated. Many activities are done in conjunction with students from other local English language schools to further develop language in a social setting. The social programme is clearly advertised on all classroom notice boards and on the website. Attendance at social events is good. Feedback from students during interviews shows they particularly appreciate the social aspect of their time at the school and the chance to meet students from other schools, where they take turns to speak their first language and English. Students benefit from good discounts in local shops and cafes on production of their student card.

- 4.7 The school does not provide any residential accommodation, although it has close links with student accommodation agencies. Some short-stay students secure accommodation in flat shares or in the halls of the nearby university. Accommodation arrangements with agents are well managed. Students are encouraged to discuss any concerns and staff meticulously record any complaints regarding accommodation and contact agencies on students' behalf if necessary.
- 4.8 Relationships between staff and students and amongst students are excellent. Students consider staff to be knowledgeable, friendly and approachable. Students testify that teachers show concern for them and that there is always a member of staff to talk to if they have personal issues. A full-time welfare officer assists with students' concerns and helps with accommodation, health and employment-related matters.
- 4.9 The school is effective in promoting integration and tolerance. Clear procedures help prevent bullying and harassment and there have been no recorded incidents of such behaviour.
- 4.10 The school combines the enrolment process with induction and, as such, there is no formal separate induction. Whilst students are provided with a useful introduction to the school there is insufficient information on general life in the city. In interviews students commented they would welcome more information on transport, including underground zones, concession cards and night travel.
- 4.11 The school provides appropriate feedback to students when leaving. Students receive a certificate showing their achievement and guidance on further progression. All those leaving are asked to complete an evaluation of their time at the school.

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

### **5.(a) Ownership and oversight**

- 5.1 There is effective oversight of both the strategic and operational functions of the school. The proprietors fully discharge their responsibilities in relation to maintaining educational standards, planning for expansion and financial management. There is appropriate investment in staff, accommodation and resources. Close monitoring of finance matters aligned to business development plans help ensure the school is on a stable footing to move forward. The ethos of the school is regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of prospective students.
- 5.2 The proprietors have designated and clear responsibilities for the various functions of the school. One of the proprietors is present most of the time, working in the reception area. Both have excellent insight into the working of the school, closely monitoring the health safety and welfare of all students.
- 5.3 The school has appropriate legal permissions for its premises and the materials it uses for delivering lessons and examinations.

### **5. (b) Management structures and responsibilities**

- 5.4 Responsibilities are clear and managers effectively discharge their responsibilities with regard to the running of the school and the welfare of students. This is done in accordance with the clear aims of the school, which are well thought out and revisited frequently.
- 5.5 Policies are reviewed regularly and good links with external agencies have been formed so that students with specific needs can be guided and supported. Managers discharge their responsibilities for health, safety and welfare effectively. Clear procedures are in place to ensure that accommodation, resources and safety equipment are maintained to an appropriate standard.
- 5.6 Management welcomes feedback from staff regarding the curriculum and strategic development of the school, which is used to make improvements to the provision. Formal self-evaluation is new to the school. A useful evaluation was provided for the inspection, although much of it was descriptive and it did not accurately identify key strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The report did not include a quality improvement plan to highlight responsibilities or timescales for improving aspects of provision.
- 5.7 The school occasionally provides work experience for interns from overseas to assist in marketing and administration in the school. Interns provide valuable expertise in management information systems and in the use of social networking sites. The school collects very good management information, enabling it to

compare trends in performance and success. This information has been used to market the school effectively.

- 5.8 The school has recruited and trained good quality staff. New recruits undergo a formal interview and are observed giving a lesson to a group of students. Initial training in the direct method of teaching English helps ensure consistency of delivery and the maintenance of high standards. Staff retention is good and a number of staff have remained at the school for up to five years. The school provides good support for its teachers, ensuring all are updated on the latest requirements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, health and safety and first aid.

### **5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback**

- 5.9 The school makes good use of both formal and informal feedback. Comments, concerns and recommendations are discussed and analysed with staff. Notices are displayed around the school notifying students of any actions taken as a result of feedback. However, many survey questions relate to classroom practice rather than the general activity of the school.
- 5.10 As part of the quality improvement procedure formal observations of teaching and learning for general English teachers are carried out with oral and written feedback provided. Staff using the direct method are also monitored on a regular but more informal basis.
- 5.11 A well-used social networking site keeps students and staff up-to-date on activities and general news. Good feedback is gathered from this site and is used to make improvements to the provision. Concerns of students are taken seriously and dealt with professionally. Most routine issues are dealt with promptly and effectively by teaching staff or managers. All complaints are recorded with the resolution stated. Complaints are discussed at staff meetings. The procedure states that the owners' decision is final. Whilst there have been no serious complaints that have warranted this, there is no provision for external independent arbitration of complaints.
- 5.12 Student views of the school in the pre-inspection survey were largely positive, welcoming the supportive environment and the rapid progress they make in language deployment. Overall, inspection evidence validated the feedback provided by students in the survey.
- 5.13 A lateness policy was implemented following feedback from staff and students when comments about latecomers disrupting classes were made. Punctuality has improved significantly as a result.

### **5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks**

- 5.14 Thorough and reliable checking of staff takes place. Checks are carried out regarding their suitability to work with students under the age of 18 and their residency and work status in the United Kingdom.

**5.(e) Provision of information**

- 5.15 The school website is clearly laid out and informative, containing all the information required by the Standards. Many students enrol having found all the necessary information after accessing the website and the school's social network site. Clear information on fees and the curriculum is shown on the site.
- 5.16 All the required information was provided to inspectors prior to the visit. The school responded well to requests during the inspection.

## 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 the proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred and attended enrolment sessions. The responses of staff and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr David Baber	Lead Inspector
Mrs Ann O'Toole	Team Inspector
Mr David Godfrey	Team Inspector
Mrs Jane Beeson	Team Inspector