



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

WIMBLEDON LANGUAGE ACADEMY

Full Name of College	Wimbledon Language Academy Limited
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Email Address	mbrock@wlang.co.uk
Principal	Mr Martin Brock
Proprietor	Mr Martin Brock
Age Range	18+
Total Number of students	79
	18+: 79
	EFL only: 79
Inspection dates	20 - 22 November 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- 1.1 Wimbledon Language Academy is a limited company owned by the principal and director of studies, who both teach full time at the school. Its aim is to provide low-cost, high-quality English language courses to international students and provide them with a meaningful learning and cultural experience. Courses are matched to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).
- 1.2 The academy, established in 2001 by all the present members of staff, is situated in a modern two-storey building in a quiet residential area of Wimbledon. In 2006 the directors purchased the property and freehold.
- 1.3 There were 79 students from 23 countries on roll at the time of the inspection. Although some students are recruited through agents, the majority enrol directly with the academy as a result of recommendations from former students or being employed locally. Tier 4 students are required to have an approved qualification and an online video interview is arranged where possible. All students are re-assessed on arrival before being placed in the most appropriate class. A small minority of students take internationally recognised English as a foreign language (EFL) examinations.
- 1.4 The academy offers general English language courses from pre-intermediate to advanced level lasting between 2 and 42 weeks with continuous enrolment throughout the year. Separate timetables operate in the mornings and afternoons, each offering 15 hour courses. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds with approximately half from Europe and the rest mainly from Brazil and Asia. Roughly two thirds of students are female, and all are over 18.
- 1.5 English is an additional language for all students. No student has been assessed as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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	1 Exceeds 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 quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning exceeds expectations. A comprehensive initial assessment and thorough needs analysis ensure that students are well placed according to their needs and abilities. Students are supported by regular tutorials which feed into individual learning programmes (ILPs), although these do not always focus sufficiently on individuals' targets. The curriculum is excellent, meeting the needs and objectives of the students and ensuring smooth progression to higher levels. Teachers are very knowledgeable and experienced and teaching is mostly excellent, effectively promoting cultural awareness and integration. Students take advantage of opportunities for independent study, well-supported by staff. Marking does not always show how work can be improved. Few students sit English language examinations, but results are in line with national averages. Inspection evidence shows that students make very good progress in relation to their starting points.
- 2.2 Student welfare, including health and safety, meets expectations. Policies and procedures reduce risk from fire and other hazards, ensuring a safe and secure learning environment. Attendance is rigorously monitored and records accurately maintained, with secure systems in place for reporting to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) when required. Relationships between students and staff and amongst students themselves are excellent. Interesting cultural and social events reinforce this integration and contribute to linguistic development. Premises are very well maintained with bright classrooms and good social provision which further contributes to student integration.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management meet expectations, affording clear educational direction and review together with judicious financial planning and investment. Teachers are well-qualified and experienced, and benefit from a programme of continued professional development (CPD). However, formal systems of self-evaluation and planning have only recently been introduced, and no system of appraisal is in place to identify and meet staff professional development needs. Student feedback is extremely positive and though this is regularly monitored, it does not contribute to a formal and continuous cycle of self-evaluation to further improve the provision.

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 school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the marking of student work provides specific guidance for improvement.
 2. Ensure that ILPs clearly identify specific and measurable student targets which are reviewed regularly.
 3. Develop a regular process of appraisals to ensure that staff professional development needs are identified and met.
 4. Ensure that a review of health and safety procedures is included in staff training.
 5. Instigate a more formal process for collecting and analysing student feedback to maximise improvements across the provision.

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

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

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to and on arrival is very good. All students sit a placement test prior to arrival which is followed by a further assessment on arrival. This includes a needs analysis to ensure that students are able to gain maximum benefit from their course. Students are placed in class according to the results of initial assessments. Placement is usually very accurate but students are moved quickly to other programmes if necessary.
- 3.2 All assessment information is passed to the teacher to provide an accurate basis on which to plan a programme of study. ILPs are guided by the initial assessment as well as by information from tutorials. These are regularly reviewed and updated. Students report that their needs are carefully considered and overall course satisfaction is extremely high.
- 3.3 Students receive accurate information from agents and from the comprehensive website which includes a detailed brochure. On arrival a welcome pack ensures that students receive accurate information and guidance on the school and the UK. Staff offer further advice to ensure that students are able to settle quickly and to benefit from their chosen course of study.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 The match of course provision and the curriculum to student objectives is excellent and in accordance with the school's aims.
- 3.5 The course provision and curriculum are very appropriate for both short and long-term students' needs and objectives. The curriculum is based on the most suitable book for each programme. Course flexibility allows teachers to supplement the curriculum with interesting and relevant material to ensure that lessons are stimulating and well-suited to students' needs. Students receive much individual attention from the dedicated staff who frequently stay late to give them extra individual work or to direct them to appropriate websites for independent study. As a result, outcomes for students are excellent.
- 3.6 The admission system allows for a good level of flexibility regarding start dates, as students can enrol and leave throughout the year. Courses match those on offer in the website. The vast majority of students complete the courses they register for.

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

- 3.7 Teaching is very good overall. Teaching enables students to acquire new knowledge and to make very good progress. Lessons are student-centred and teachers are sensitive to their needs, resulting in a high level of engagement in lessons. Time

management is good and teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. Activities are interesting and varied and are appropriate to class level and age. Teachers take many opportunities to promote cultural awareness and encourage all students to share experiences. Sensitive correction in class supports student progress and marking of student work is thorough. However, this does not always offer sufficient advice on how to improve. Teachers have access to the students' ILPs when planning lessons, but these do not contain sufficient detail about each student's targets

- 3.8 The school is well-resourced with CD players, an overhead projector, television and DVD player. A small computer room and a large bank of DVDs and other useful resources are available for independent study.
- 3.9 Students demonstrate maturity as independent learners. Some students make excellent use of the school's resources to pursue individual learning and career goals. This is very well supported by staff who offer thoughtful guidance and advice. In interviews and questionnaires students express great satisfaction with the teaching and help they receive from staff; they report that the school enables them to develop self-esteem and to use their English skills with confidence. Outcomes for students are therefore excellent.

3.(d) Attainment and Progress

- 3.10 Attainment and progress are very good. Few students take internationally-recognised EFL examinations, but where they do, results are in line with national averages.
- 3.11 Students report that they are highly satisfied with their courses, their progress and the teachers. Short term students confirm that they make effective progress, reinforcing their language skills and gaining confidence. Assessment of attainment and progress for longer term students is recorded on ILPs and identified in course review tests, which are matched against the CEFR. Starting points against final attainment are clearly identified.

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 Good regard is paid to health and safety and to the security of the premises. Frequent recorded fire drills, alarm testing and fire equipment checks by an external company ensure that students are safe. The school has a 'responsible person' in charge of fire safety and all staff are aware of their individual duties in case of fire. Clear signage and evacuation plans are posted around the building and students are made aware of fire procedures on arrival. The school has a self-assessed fire risk assessment using online criteria set out by the London Fire Brigade. A fire survey by an external company has been arranged. Risk assessments for activities outside the school are in place and risk assessments for the building are updated annually. Portable appliance testing is up to date and renewed annually by an external company.
- 4.2 The school has a detailed health and safety policy, including first aid, which is made available on the website. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for students who are ill. There is currently one trained first-aider with training in place for a further member of staff. The school has good contacts at the nearby NHS drop-in centre and the local hospital is a short distance away. This ensures that students' needs can be satisfactorily met.
- 4.3 The premises are bright, clean and generally suitable for the activities taking place. The building is light and well-ventilated with good furnishings and lively decoration. There are adequate washrooms for the number of students. Classrooms, however, are somewhat small for the number of students on the register. Well-maintained common room areas and outdoor recreation facilities allow students to meet together and practise their developing English language skills.
- 4.4 In interviews and questionnaires, students' responses indicate that they feel very safe and secure and that their needs are well-met. Inspection findings support this view.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.5 Fair and clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees and deposits are provided for students.
- 4.6 Admission and attendance records are meticulously kept. Personal student data is checked weekly to ensure information is current. Timely arrangements are in place for contacting students who do not attend, and for contacting the UKBA if required. An electronic database highlights Tier 4 visa expiry dates and these are carefully monitored.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.7 Pastoral support is excellent and in accordance with the school's aims. Student questionnaires and interviews confirm that staff provide on-going support and guidance, and that relationships between staff and students, and amongst students themselves, are excellent. The school remains open after classes enabling students to take advantage of extra staff support and facilities for independent study. Students report that staff are generous with their time both in academic and personal matters. The excellent social programme further creates strong bonds amongst students and staff.
- 4.8 The school is successful in promoting tolerance and integration. Suitable policies are in place to guard against harassment and bullying. There is no record of inappropriate behaviour. Cultural and linguistic diversity is celebrated and students benefit from the inclusive atmosphere. Students are able to take full advantage of the learning and cultural opportunities to maximise their progress.
- 4.9 The school provides informal career information to enable students to make choices about their future.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good. The continuity of the management and ownership contributes to effective oversight in line with the school's aims. Proprietors are conscientious in discharging their responsibilities for educational standards. Regular formal and informal meetings also ensure that careful consideration is paid to financial planning, with investment in staff and resources where possible. Since many policies have only recently been updated to include all required information, these are not yet sufficiently embedded to evaluate their effectiveness. Occasional supply staff are recruited from a specialist EFL agency thus ensuring that student needs continue to be well met during any staff absence.
- 5.2 Proprietors have a good insight into the working of the school, although processes for monitoring and planning have tended to be informal until the recent past. They are effective in discharging their duties for welfare, health and safety throughout the school to ensure that students' needs continue to be met in all areas.
- 5.3 Legal permissions from all relevant bodies are in place.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.4 Leadership and management are effective, and staff at all levels effectively discharge their delegated responsibilities in accordance with the aims of the organisation. Policies are implemented appropriately. Very good educational direction supports students in achieving their learning goals and promotes personal development. As a result students express a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of their programme.
- 5.5 Managers carry out self-evaluation but this process has been informal until recently, and not used as the basis for development planning. Formal targets linked into an action plan are now in place to allow monitoring of identified areas for growth and improvement.
- 5.6 The principal and director of studies have full-time teaching duties and are therefore fully involved in all aspects of the school. Staff are well qualified and highly motivated; communication is excellent with all staff dedicated to achieving high quality outcomes for students. Teaching is regularly observed by the director of studies but at present no system of appraisals operates to identify and meet the professional needs of staff. While the extensive professional development programme includes internal and external elements, preparing staff well for their educational and pastoral roles, insufficient attention is given to updating staff health and safety training.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.7 Quality assurance is good and the proprietors are successful in focusing on areas of underperformance to raise standards. Data from test results, tutorials, informal student feedback and questionnaires is taken into account to improve the provision. However, this information is not sufficiently analysed to ensure that it brings about the most effective improvements.
- 5.8 The complaints procedure is clear. The procedures ensure that any concerns are recorded with provision made for an external arbitrator if required. There have been no complaints to date.
- 5.9 Responses to pre-inspection questionnaires reflect a very high level of student satisfaction with the standard of education, facilities and support given by staff. Interviews with students confirmed this outcome.

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

- 5.10 The school applies thorough and reliable arrangements for checking the suitability and qualifications of staff employed. All staff have enhanced CRB checks.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.11 The school's website contains all the information required.
- 5.12 The school has been most conscientious in providing inspectors with all the information required for their work.

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 proprietors. The responses of students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mrs Lynne Heath	Lead Inspector
Mr John Rooney	Team Inspector