



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

ALPHA OMEGA COLLEGE

(Company Registration No. 5568718)

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Principal	Ms Mary Matti
Proprietor	Ms Mary Matti
Age Range	8+
Total number of students	8
Numbers by age and type of study	18+: 8 EFL only: 2 FE only: 6
Inspection dates	1 - 3 November 2016

PREFACE

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

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.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Alpha Omega College is a private further education and English language college founded in 2005 and located in the centre of Cardiff, South Wales. It is a limited company owned by one director who is also the principal. The aim of the college is to ensure high quality learning along with a strong focus on students' welfare.
- 1.2 The college offers English language and vocational courses. The English language courses include year round general English and examination preparation courses and a short summer school for students between the ages of 8 and 17. Vocational courses offered are from level 4 to level 7 in business and management, health and social care management, travel and tourism and IT. In addition, the college offers an international foundation programme for students preparing for higher education, combining English language and academic skills.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were eight students, with six enrolled on level 7 diplomas in business management, travel and tourism management and IT, and two on a general English course at intermediate level. All students are over 18 years and the majority are male. The college receives students from a wide range of nationalities. The current students are from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Italy.
- 1.4 Students from the age of 18 years upwards are accepted for the year round courses. At the time of the inspection no students were identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.5 The college was previously inspected on 27 May 2015 when it met all Key Standards and the quality of education was judged to meet expectations.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2.1 **The college needs improvement.** At the time of the inspection, the following Key Standard for Educational Oversight was not met:

1. Where students under 18 accommodated in host families arranged by the college, does the main carer in the family have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check? Where those under 16 are accommodated in host families for more than 28 days, has the local authority been alerted? **[39]**

2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is satisfactory. The assessment of students prior to or on arrival is satisfactory. Prior qualifications are checked thoroughly to ensure entry requirements are met. Support for learning or English language needs is informal but effective and is valued by students. Course provision is good and the courses on offer to Tier 4 entrant international students lead to qualifications which meet the definition of an approved qualification for Home Office purposes. Course information is thorough and accurate. Courses are well planned and the majority of students complete their courses successfully. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge. However, in the majority of lessons the students are not challenged sufficiently to perform at the level of their course, and teachers do not regularly summarise key points from lessons in order to consolidate learning. Regular tutorials provide the opportunity to discuss progress, but for most students these do not result in clear learning targets confirming what students need to do to improve. Students are highly motivated, work hard and make good progress. Their achievement in internal tests and external examinations is good.

2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is satisfactory. Health, safety and the security of premises are good. Appropriate policies and procedures are up to date and well implemented. Health and safety checks are carried out systematically and help to ensure that the college is a safe place. The premises are of a satisfactory quality, fit for purpose and well maintained. Admission and attendance records are accurate and well monitored. The college makes the required reports to the Home Office regarding Tier 4 visa students. Pastoral care is good. Students value the accessibility and responsiveness of all staff. Safeguarding is satisfactory. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place. Training for all staff is thorough and Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks are carried out on all staff to check their suitability to work with those under 18 years. The college's e-safety statement is not part of the safeguarding policy, making it less likely to be understood by all staff. The management of residential accommodation is unsatisfactory. Most students organise their own accommodation, with the college managing a small number of home stays for students under 18 years. At the time of the inspection most home stay records were incomplete or unavailable, making it impossible to review college procedures for checking home stay premises and the suitability of host families to accommodate students under 18 years.

- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. Ownership and oversight are satisfactory. The proprietor is involved in all aspects of the college and meets her statutory responsibilities adequately, but the monitoring of key procedures is insufficient. Management structures and responsibilities are satisfactory. Regular meetings involve all staff and ensure that they are well informed about changes and developments. A minority of the college's documentation is poorly organised and not well implemented. This reduces the effectiveness of the associated management and administrative procedures. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Student feedback is used well to identify issues for improvement. Staff appraisals and teacher observations are thorough and result in clear targets for improvement. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and actions are regularly identified in meetings, but action planning is not sufficiently systematic. Actions are not monitored consistently to check their progress and completion. Staff selection and recruitment are good, with all appropriate identity and suitability checks made when appointing new staff.

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

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

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to or on arrival is satisfactory. Enrolment onto courses is based on the details provided by students in their application forms. The college thoroughly checks that prior qualifications, including English language tests, meet course entry requirements and Home Office requirements for Tier 4 visa students.
- 3.2 The majority of international students are supported by agents in their applications and in these cases pre-entry interviews are carried out by agents rather than college staff. Students on English language courses undertake placement tests which provide an accurate basis for course placement. English teachers use initial assessment data well to plan programmes of study and choice of teaching materials.
- 3.3 The identification of language of learning difficulties occurs once students start courses, through self-declaration or through teachers' observations. If individual needs are identified, provision is managed well in order to accommodate them, with vocational students offered effective English language support where necessary, and some satisfactory use of specialist resources to support dyslexic students.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 Course provision and the curriculum are good. There is a clear statement of educational purpose, which results in the college offering an extensive range of courses. Course details are explained thoroughly and accurately on the website and in college documentation. As a result students make informed choices about courses that enable them to progress to their next step in training, education or employment.
- 3.5 Only a minority of courses offered are currently running, but these are well supported by plans and schemes of work. Course content is appropriate to the ages, aptitudes, and language capabilities of students. The learning experience for students is satisfactory; students make good progress and the majority complete their courses successfully.
- 3.6 The courses on offer to Tier 4 entrant international students lead to qualifications which meet the definition of an approved qualification for Home Office purposes. Where appropriate students are registered with the awarding bodies for the qualifications they are undertaking.

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

- 3.7 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The majority of teaching is well planned, based on teachers' good understanding of their students. Teaching staff have a good knowledge of their subjects, but most teaching does not challenge students sufficiently. On the higher level vocational courses there is insufficient use

of strategies to develop understanding and encourage students to be fully involved in learning. On all courses opportunities are missed to summarise key learning points in lessons in order to reinforce learning and check understanding. Teachers use learning materials that are relevant and appropriate to students' interests. Students are able and highly motivated; they work hard and make good progress.

- 3.8 Assessment is well managed and reviews of students' learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a good understanding of the aptitudes, cultural background, needs and prior attainments of the students. This information is used well in lessons. Students value the support provided by teachers. Monthly tutorials result in regular reports on progress made, but for most students these do not result in learning targets which specifically identify what they need to do to improve.
- 3.9 Classroom resources are satisfactory and appropriate for the courses offered and student numbers.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.10 Students' attainment and progress are good. Students are able and are enrolled onto courses that enable them to make progress compared to their previous levels of attainment. External examination results are not analysed systematically or presented in a way that allows a clear picture of how successful students are in achieving external qualifications. However, internal testing and the existing records of examination results indicate that students are making good and timely progress.
- 3.11 All vocational courses offered follow the current national qualifications framework and language courses are set at levels defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This ensures consistency and allows students to identify progression routes.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

- 4.1 Health, safety and security of the premises are good. Effective arrangements are in place for managing the health and safety of students and staff. Appropriate policies are comprehensive, up to date and implemented well. Students and staff receive sufficient information on health and safety at induction and in their handbooks, and are aware of first aid and emergency procedures.
- 4.2 Health and safety issues are checked regularly, and emergency equipment and alarms are maintained well. All checks are recorded efficiently. A thorough annual risk assessment is carried out by external consultants, with any resulting actions responded to well. Good levels of training in fire safety are maintained for all staff, with additional specialist training provided for fire marshals and first aiders. Emergency signage is clear throughout the college. First aid procedures are thorough, with two trained first-aiders, a well-stocked first aid box and an accident log. This makes the college a safe place for students and staff.
- 4.3 The premises are of a satisfactory quality and are well maintained. They provide appropriately furnished, light and spacious teaching rooms, and student and staff areas. All areas are clean and fit for purpose, but the level of tidiness varies, with some offices being cluttered. Security arrangements are good.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.4 Registration and attendance records are good. Admission procedures are thorough and well recorded. Attendance records are accurate and attendance monitoring is thorough, with appropriate procedures in place to follow-up unauthorised absences. Students are aware of the requirement of good attendance and, as a result, attendance rates are good.
- 4.5 The college makes the necessary reports to the Home Office when a student fails to enrol or otherwise discontinues study and does not fulfil the Home Office's requirements for attendance. The procedures for the collection and refund of fees have changed recently and at the time of the inspection they varied between documents, but the full procedures contained the terms and conditions published on the website are clear.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.6 Pastoral support is good. There is a comprehensive induction which enables students to settle into their course quickly. Records are maintained to ensure that all new students receive the full induction programme.
- 4.7 Students confirm that all teaching and support staff are accessible and approachable, and will provide support on academic and personal issues. They value the level of support provided. Timetabled tutorials provide good opportunities to discuss

pastoral as well as academic matters, and tutorial records are maintained of issues raised. Records of pastoral issues raised are now maintained consistently, but the outcomes of welfare meetings are not monitored systematically to ensure that issues are resolved.

- 4.8 There is a structured monthly social programme; attendance is compulsory for vocational students. In addition there is a programme of less formal activities and events that students may attend. These activities support cultural development and awareness of the local area. They enhance students' educational experience and, for international students, their time in the UK. Staff provide students with satisfactory informal careers advice and support on progression to higher education.
- 4.9 Satisfactory policies relating to bullying and abuse are in place. Students report that their relationships with staff and amongst themselves are good.

4. (d) Safeguarding for under 18s

- 4.10 Safeguarding is satisfactory. The college meets national guidelines with regard to the safeguarding of students aged under 18 years. Safeguarding policies and procedures are comprehensive. There is a separate statement to students in their handbook concerning e-safety, but this is not part of the safeguarding policy, giving it less status and making it less likely to be understood by all staff.
- 4.11 All staff receive safeguarding training and the designated safeguarding person has appropriate level 3 training. The designated person is not full-time but other staff are identified to deputise and therefore appropriate staff are always accessible to students. All staff have enhanced DBS checks to ensure their suitability to work with young people.
- 4.12 Good arrangements are in place to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. An anti-radicalisation policy raises awareness on this issue and was recently launched to staff in a training session. All staff have undertaken associated online training, to strengthen awareness of the issue.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.13 The management of residential accommodation is unsatisfactory. Most students organise their own accommodation or stay with their own families locally. The college manages a small number of home stay providers for students on the summer school who are under 18 years. College procedures require that host families are inspected and monitored, with records kept on facilities and arrangements in the accommodation, number of occupants and whether the main carers hold enhanced DBS suitability checks. These procedures are fundamental to ensuring that students are safe and secure in home stays. However, at the time of inspection most home stay records were incomplete or not available. As a result, inspectors were not able to confirm that college procedures for the approval and monitoring of home stays were fully implemented.

- 4.14 Currently the college does not accommodate students under 16 years for more than 28 days in a home stay, but is aware of the need to register such accommodation with the local authority if that situation arises

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight are satisfactory. The proprietor is also the principal and therefore she is involved in all operational and strategic issues, and receives reports on the performance of the college through her attendance at most staff and managers meetings. The proprietor has an appropriate focus on growth and diversification for the long-term benefit of the college. But aspects of its current provision have not improved. The quality of teaching has declined and the implementation of key procedures is not monitored sufficiently.
- 5.2 Appropriate policies and procedures are in place, providing a framework to meet statutory responsibilities and to ensure educational standards and students' safety and welfare are maintained. Most of the policies are reviewed regularly, but there are some inconsistencies or duplication in the documents, resulting in possible confusion or misunderstanding by staff or students.
- 5.3 Staff turnover is high, but the college appoints well qualified and experienced staff. All necessary legal permissions are in place from all relevant bodies.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.4 Management structures and responsibilities are satisfactory. Educational direction in the college is clear. Regular meetings involve all staff; as a result, they are aware of developments and are involved in plans for change. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The annual self-evaluation report is a satisfactory analysis of the college's strengths, and actions are regularly identified in meetings. However, the report does not identify all of its areas for development and action planning is not sufficiently systematic, with no overall plan of actions identified to ensure that they are regularly monitored.
- 5.5 College procedures are not all adequately supported by documentation, a minority of which is poorly organised, not implemented consistently and not readily accessible. As a result, the effectiveness of those procedures is limited. There is insufficient document control, with a small minority documents duplicated without a clear indication of which is the current version.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.6 Quality assurance is satisfactory. The collection and analysis of student feedback is good. It is collected regularly, and the outcomes analysed and presented to monthly feedback meetings with staff and student representatives present. This results in actions which are then discussed further, where appropriate, in management meetings. A number of actions have been taken in response to student feedback, but the monitoring of the actions identified by this process is insufficient. Staff feedback is ensured by their regular attendance at meetings.

- 5.7 The analysis of external examination results is limited. The college records examination results and staff are aware of students' performance, but results are not collated in a way which allows them to be used effectively in self-evaluation.
- 5.8 The review of staff performance is good. Staff appraisals and observations of teachers are regular and methodical. Their outcomes are used to identify both personal development needs and actions for the college. Feedback to teachers after lesson observations is thorough and includes clear targets for development or improvement, but these targets are not systematically monitored at subsequent observations to check progress.
- 5.9 The complaints procedure is satisfactory and well publicised. At the start of the inspection it did not include a clear indication of who students should go to for independent adjudication if a complaint is not resolved to their satisfaction. During the inspection this was confirmed and details in the handbook and on the website were changed to meet that requirement well.

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

- 5.10 Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are good. The selection of new staff is based upon a safer recruitment policy which is clear and appropriate. Prior to appointment, all necessary identity, qualifications and suitability checks are carried out. These include enhanced DBS checks for all staff to ensure their suitability to work with students under 18 years. These are recorded fully in staff files and in a single central record.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.11 The provision of information is satisfactory. The college's website is clear and comprehensive, providing realistic and accurate information. This is supported well by detailed prospectuses and handbooks. The college responded satisfactorily in providing requested information to inspectors in connection with this inspection.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Actions required to meet the Standards

In order to meet the Standards of Educational Oversight, the college must:

- Ensure that records for all home stays are complete, including confirmation of inspections of accommodation and enhanced DBS checks for the main carer where those under 18 are accommodated, and available for the college to monitor and external bodies to review. **[39]**

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Improve documentation and associated management procedures to ensure that they are well organised, fit for purpose, current and fully implemented.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of provision to ensure that managers respond to areas where improvement is required.
- Strengthen action planning by developing a system which ensures that all actions identified are regularly monitored for their progress and completion.
- Develop teaching skills and strategies to ensure teachers summarise key learning points and provide an appropriate challenge to students on higher level courses.
- Strengthen safeguarding by including the college's e-safety statement in the safeguarding policy.

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 proprietor. 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

Mr Neil Haynes	Lead Inspector
Ms Sarah Colmar	Team Inspector