



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

EXTENDED MONITORING VISIT

EMPIRE COLLEGE LONDON

Full Name of College **Empire College London**

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Head of Centre Ms Rita Sandhu

Proprietor Mr Qurban Ali Kakar

Age Range 18+

Total number of students 148

Numbers by age and type of study

18+:	148
FE only:	148

Inspection date **21 May 2013**

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight 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, including 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 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 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.

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. CONTEXT

- 1.1 Empire College London was established in 2003 and is based in commercial premises in Ilford, Essex. The college is privately owned and led by the managing director in partnership with the head of centre and other senior staff. The college aims to provide high quality academic education to enable students to compete and excel on an international level. A range of courses are offered at levels 3 to 7 in business management and information technology (IT). The Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector is offered and also the Association of Chartered Accountants courses at Level 6. Support to develop students' English language skills is also provided where the need is identified.
- 1.2 There are 148 students enrolled, the majority are male, and most come from the India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Nigeria. The college caters for students aged 18 and over, all of whom are on Tier 4 student visas. Currently no students are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.3 The college was first inspected on 08 to 10 May 2012 and was judged to exceed expectations. Since that time there has been a change of 20% or more of permanent teaching staff that required an extended monitoring visit. Consequently, the key area of the quality of curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements was inspected in full.
- 1.4 The main action points and recommendations from the previous report are:
 - Improve teaching and learning through the use, by teachers, of a range of teaching and learning strategies that engage and challenge students.
 - Ensure consistency in grading and feedback on assessed work by introducing standardisation procedures and sharing good practice.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations.** The previous inspection of 8 to 10 May 2012 was judged to exceed expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The quality of curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is good. The college has made good progress in ensuring that all staff employ a wide range of teaching methods so that learning engages students and challenges them well. All work is regularly marked in accordance with the new college assessment and marking policy. Students receive good feedback on their progress and systematic guidance on what they need to do to improve their work further. Students are assessed on arrival and information about their previous academic achievements is used effectively by teachers in planning lessons and setting learning goals. Teachers have good subject knowledge and well paced lessons are characterised by a lively and positive learning ethos. The standard of students' work is good and their achievement is above the level expected given their prior levels of attainment. The courses offered lead to Tier 4 qualifications and meet students' needs well.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Health and safety provision is of a very high standard. Comprehensive policies and careful procedures are in place and are monitored very efficiently by well-trained staff. The premises provide a comfortable and secure learning environment for all students. Pastoral care is very efficiently organised so that students have regular contact with teachers and their personal tutors so that any concerns are followed up quickly. Very accurate admissions and attendance records are maintained and systems for making the necessary reports to the Home Office are efficient. Guidance for students moving to further studies, university, or to employment is very well organised.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The proprietor and senior managers provide very effective leadership and a strong sense of direction. The aims of the college are promoted successfully with high quality academic education enabling students to compete on an international level in their chosen courses. All areas of the work of the college are subject to regular and rigorous scrutiny. Senior staff are eager to identify ways in which the college can improve and recognise that self-evaluation is not yet finely structured into a clear plan for improvement. Not all actions for improvement are succinctly identified with sharp criteria for success. Lessons are observed regularly by senior staff and by an external appraiser. However, succinct areas for improvement are not consistently identified or followed up to promote sustained improvement of teaching. The college web site and information provided for students is comprehensive and very helpful.

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

- 3.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is good. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 3.2 The recommendation in this area from the last inspection report is:
- Improve teaching and learning through the use, by teachers, of a range of teaching and learning strategies that engage and challenge students.
- 3.3 Students are taught well by teachers and good progress has been made in meeting the recommendations of the last report. Students are carefully assessed when they apply to the college and on admission. This information is used well by personal tutors to prepare individual learning plans that are shared efficiently with class teachers. The plans are used effectively to monitor and accelerate students' progress with targets for improvement, and also to identify any areas where additional support may be needed. As a result the vast majority of students make good progress and complete their courses. Examination results indicate that students achieve well. Both examination results and courses are reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain successful and relevant to the needs of students. Most students progress to university or to employment.
- 3.4 A significant proportion of the teaching staff leave or join the college each term as employment is on a termly contract. All new teachers are carefully introduced into the college and given detailed guidance on health and safety, the marking and assessment of students work, tracking students' progress, and setting targets for them. Good guidance is also given on managing large and small classes whilst providing a variety of learning experiences for students. Support and monitoring of new staff ensures that all teaching staff, at whatever stage they join the college, are effective in the classroom.
- 3.5 Lessons are lively and students have a variety of tasks that are interesting and offer good challenge. In particular, group research tasks allow good collaboration between students and teachers manage group feedback to the rest of class well helping to promote good progress. Students' attainment and progress is carefully tracked through class work, assignments and internal tests. Some teachers are beginning to extend the use of this assessment information to plan work of different levels in class to match the needs of students of different ability. The pace of learning is good and skilful questioning by teachers ensures that all students are fully involved in their learning. Students show positive attitudes to their work and enjoy discussions, especially in small groups, where they share ideas well.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 The well being and safety of all students is a very high priority. The premises are safe and easily accessible for students with physical disabilities. Classrooms are spacious and well furnished with interactive white boards that are used well to enliven learning. Very good security and health and safety measures are in place and regularly monitored to ensure they are fully effective. Risk assessments are carried out diligently and all necessary measures are taken to reduce fire hazards. Effective policies are in place and reviewed by staff on an annual basis. Students are aware of the policies to prevent bullying and harassment.
- 4.3 The pastoral support of students is extremely well organised through the system of personal tutors. Students meet regularly with their tutor to discuss both academic and personal issues. There is a consistent exchange of information between class teachers, administrators and tutors to ensure this system is very effective. Students reported that they found the level of care and guidance they received to be high. Extra-curricular activities are varied and frequent. They enable students to explore the life and culture of the United Kingdom fully and also extend their social links.
- 4.4 Students' registration and attendance records are exemplary. Procedures to follow up on late arrival and attendance issues are very comprehensive and attendance is tracked very accurately. Despite the very best endeavours of the college a few students do not attend regularly or arrive on time and this leads to exclusion and a report to the Home Office for poor attendance. The college provides very good guidance for students when they are considering higher education and career options.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 5.2 The recommendation in this area from the last inspection report is:
- Ensure consistency in grading and feedback on assessed work by introducing standardisation procedures and sharing good practice.
- 5.3 Progress made in addressing the recommendations from the last report has been good. Quality assurance systems are very good and improving. A marking and assessment policy now ensures that all staff have a consistent approach and feedback to students on their progress is regular and detailed. Assessment is also developing gradually to embrace lesson planning that caters more effectively for different ability groups in a class. Lessons are regularly observed and there have been very recent improvements to the comprehensive criteria against which teaching and learning is evaluated. However, inconsistencies remain in the clarity with which development points are identified for teachers and how improvement is monitored and followed up to help improve all teaching to an excellent standard.
- 5.4 All areas of the work of the college are subject to careful evaluation with strengths and areas for improvement accurately identified. Senior staff, including the proprietor who plays a very active role in the college, meet frequently and communication with teaching staff is excellent. The roles and responsibilities for the senior team are clearly defined. They work as a close and dedicated partnership that is determined to bring about further improvements. Staff changes are very well managed and do not affect the achievement of students. There is regular evaluation of all areas of the work of the college but this is not translated into a structured college development plan with clearly identified success criteria for all improvement areas.
- 5.5 The views of students are canvassed through surveys and in the meetings of student representatives. Their comments are valued and used to bring about improvements. For example, at the request of students the IT room has been relocated to provide a more spacious accommodation. Staff recruitment procedures are excellent and very thorough checks are made on the qualifications and suitability of staff for their role. Very well-structured induction arrangements prepare students effectively for their courses and gives them a wealth of practical information about local facilities.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Suggestions for further improvement

In order to improve the excellent/good/satisfactory quality provided, the college/language school is advised to:

- Identify and follow up consistently succinct areas for improvement identified in lesson observations so more lessons are excellent.
- Develop self-evaluation further to produce a detailed college development plan with specific improvement actions and success criteria.

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

Inspectors

Dr Norma Ball	Lead Inspector
Mr John Rooney	Team Inspector