



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

**MONITORING VISIT**

**EMPIRE COLLEGE LONDON**

**(Company Registration Number - 04725514)**

Full Name **Empire College London Ltd**

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Website [www.ecl.ac](http://www.ecl.ac)

Principal Ms Rita Sandhu

Proprietor Mr Qurban Ali Kakar

Age Range 18+

Total number of students 157

Numbers by age and type of study 18+: 157

FE only 157

Inspection date **02 Jun 2015**

## 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 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.

A monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the 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.

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## 1. CHARACTERISTICS AND 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. It aims to provide high quality academic education to enable students to compete and excel on an international level.
- 1.2 The college offers range of courses at levels 3 to 7 in business management, and teacher education. Awarding organisations used by the college include Pearson, City and Guilds and Awards for Training and Higher education (ATHE). Selection is based on meeting stated entry criteria. Support to develop students' English language skills is provided where a need is identified.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 157 students are enrolled, of whom 87 are male and 70 are female. There are 64 on Tier 4 visas, coming in the main from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Nigeria. Most students have English as an additional language. The college caters for students aged 18 and above. Currently no students are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 The college was last inspected in May 2013 and was judged to exceed expectations. The recommendations from the previous report are:
  - 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.

## 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations.** At the previous inspection of 21 May 2013 the college was found to exceed expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. The college has made very good progress in improving teaching and learning. Lessons feature a wide range of activities, which challenge learners and encourage high levels of participation. Students' work is marked meticulously and teachers provide clear feedback on what students have done well and what can be improved. Lessons are supported by a good quality on-line learning system. Recruitment and selection is rigorous. Prior qualifications are validated and, where needed, references are checked. Students' levels of English and mathematics are carefully assessed on arrival. The results of assessments and details of prior qualifications are entered on learning plans, which are used well by teachers to individualise learning. Courses meet UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) requirements for students on Tier 4 visas. They are certificated by reputable awarding organisations and the provision meets students' needs well.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Students feel safe in the college and know what to do in the event of a fire or if they feel unwell. The premises are fit for purpose. Accommodation is of a good standard and there is good access to computers and textbooks. Support focused on the welfare of students is excellent. Named staff provide an initial point of contact and any concerns are dealt with swiftly using external agencies where necessary. Accurate admissions and attendance registers are maintained and the college emphasises well the need to attend regularly and to be punctual. Procedures for reporting to UKVI are robust. Guidance for students near to completing their courses is excellent. Good quality information on university entrance requirements is provided. A comprehensive programme of external visits to promote business and language skills is in place.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The proprietor and senior managers are clear on the ambition and direction of the college, and they share this well with teachers and students. Comprehensive policies and carefully worded procedures are well understood by staff. The offer of qualifications has recently been improved to help ensure the college meets the needs of an increasingly diverse group of students. Quality assurance is excellent and has led to significant improvement in the provision. External experts undertake observation of teaching and learning and teachers frequently observe each other in order to share good practice. Staff development sessions focus on the key points of good teaching and learning. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and makes effective use of the views of staff and students. Additional quality audits help ensure that procedures are followed. A minority of the targets in the resulting quality improvement plan however are not specific or measurable, making it difficult

to evaluate progress. The college website is comprehensive, providing accurate useful information for potential students.

### **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. A clear policy on the aims of the college is supported by robust documentation, including schemes of work and lesson plans.
- 3.2 Entry requirements for each course are set at an appropriate level. A rigorous application process helps ensure that students are well suited for their courses. The prior qualifications of students are verified using approved national databases. All qualifications offered meet the criteria of approved qualifications as stipulated by UKVI. Students undertake English and mathematics assessments prior to entry and the results are entered on learning plans, which are used well by teachers. Consequently, teachers know their students very well and are able to plan lessons, which meet individual needs well.
- 3.3 Assessment is rigorous and meets awarding organisation requirements. Feedback from external verifiers and auditors confirms the high standard of assessment and verification. Courses are carefully designed and well delivered. Frequent course reviews involving staff and students help ensure continuous improvement of teaching and assessment.
- 3.4 Teaching is outstanding and as a result is very effective in helping students make above expected progress. Teachers are very well qualified and experienced. They have an excellent knowledge of their subjects and create lessons, which help students demonstrate their understanding through debate and presentations. Students develop good levels of confidence; they work independently and with their peers to solve problems and complete projects. Students benefit from a comprehensive on-line learning system. This helps them prepare for upcoming work, revise for assessments and view proposed social activities.
- 3.5 Students' receive excellent feedback on their work. Assignments are marked meticulously and teachers give good guidance on how they can improve the quality of their work. Consequently, they are aware of the progress they are making and what they need to do to complete successfully. Teaching staff are easily accessible outside class hours. Outcomes for students are excellent, with very high numbers achieving their qualifications and progressing to employment or higher-level courses. Scrutiny of marked work and observation of lessons show students achieve excellent levels of attainment above that expected, given their prior achievements.



#### **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 safety of students is a key priority of the college. The premises are safe and secure and students know what to do if they need to evacuate the building or if they feel unwell. Risk assessments are carried out frequently and all necessary measures are taken to reduce fire hazards. Notices on fire safety and the location of first aiders are displayed prominently throughout the building. A clear policy on first aid is well understood by all staff.
- 4.3 Premises are satisfactory. Classrooms are well appointed, spacious and well lit. Furniture is appropriate. Resources to support learning are good and have improved since the previous inspection. The library has been moved to a larger room following requests from students and the on-line learning system allows students to continue learning when away from the classroom. Students with mobility difficulties are able to access all areas of the college easily. There is an adequate number of washrooms, which are kept clean.
- 4.4 Accurate admissions and attendance are maintained and the college emphasises well the need to attend regularly and to be punctual. Procedures for reporting to UKVI are robust and the college publicises details of students who have had to leave due to poor performance or attendance. This helps remind students of the need to communicate clearly with the college if absent or late.
- 4.5 Interviews with students, scrutiny of records and results of surveys confirm that the welfare provision is outstanding. Students are acutely aware of the many support services provided by the college. If students require support with personal or academic matters, key members of staff act as an initial point of contact, promptly referring students' on to well trained staff, or where necessary external agencies.
- 4.6 Guidance on progression is excellent. Students nearing the end of their course are given clear information on their options. This includes the validity of any English language qualifications they may hold, financial information required by UKVI in order to remain in the UK and university entrance requirements.
- 4.7 The college is sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity. Students integrate very well. There have been no reported incidents of bullying or harassment. Induction to the college is thorough and comprehensive. As a result students have a good knowledge of their courses, support services and social activities. The social programme is responsive to the needs and wishes of the students. Frequent visits to the coast, business and cultural institutions help develop language, business and cultural skills. The college has no facilities where students can socialise, which restricts the opportunity for further social and language development.

## 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 recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report are:
- 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.
- 5.3 Outstanding progress has been made in addressing the first recommendation. A revised and very effective process of lesson observations using both external expertise and peer observers has resulted in a clear overview of where good practice exists and where areas for improvement remain. Staff development and the inclusion of teaching and learning as standing items on meeting agendas have led to a significant improvement in teaching and learning. As a result teaching and learning are excellent.
- 5.4 Good progress has been made towards the second recommendation. The comprehensive action plan includes responsibilities and timescales with desired outcomes, although some of the stated outcomes are not sufficiently measurable. Similarly there is no clear link between self-evaluation and the issues identified in the improvement plan.
- 5.5 Senior staff play a key role in improving provision at the college. The proprietor, centre manager and teaching staff work closely together and share a vision for the college. The proprietor attends the college frequently and has good oversight of day-to-day activities. Communication throughout the college is excellent and the roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined and well understood by all. The proprietor and senior managers have developed clear policies and procedures, which are frequently reviewed
- 5.6 Quality assurance is excellent. A range of procedures focusing on the student experience has been introduced and these have led to continuous improvement of the provision. The views of staff and students are sought through frequent surveys. Minutes of both staff and student representative meetings are meticulous and show a good focus on the key features of teaching and learning, student behaviour and social activities. An increase in the number of external visits to improve business knowledge, cultural understanding and language development has increased following feedback from students. Data is analysed well in order to make improvements to the provision. For example, information on success rates and demand for higher level qualifications led the college to make changes to the number of awarding organisations it works with. Additional audits of teaching and learning documentation help ensure consistency in lessons. Results of audits are

used to develop an annual self-assessment report. The college has a fair process for fee refunds, but does not have a formal fee protection scheme.

- 5.7 Staff recruitment procedures are excellent. Thorough checks are made on qualifications and suitability for the role. The induction for new staff is comprehensive. This enables new staff to swiftly appreciate college priorities, policies and procedures. Appraisals of staff lead to focused development aimed at improving the student experience.
- 5.8 The provision of information for the inspection was good. A clear website provides accurate information on the course provision and outlines the complaints procedure.

## **6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

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

- Ensure there are clear links between the self-evaluation, quality audits and the quality improvement plan and that the plan includes measurable targets.

## 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 attended advice and guidance sessions. 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 David Baber.	Lead Inspector
Ms Margaret Arokiasamy.	Team Inspector