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

EXTENDED MONITORING VISIT

SKOLA ENGLISH IN LONDON
Full Name  

**Skola English in London**

Address  

25-27 Oxford Street, London, W1D 2DW

Telephone Number  

02072873216

Email Address  

joe@skola.co.uk

Website  

www.skola.co.uk

Principal  

Mr Joe Waterhouse

Proprietor  

Mr Niels Toettcher

Age Range  

16+

Total number of students  

81

Numbers by age and type of study  

16-17: 18

18+: 63

EFL : only: 18

Inspection dates  

9 - 10 September 2014
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.

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. **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT**

1.1 Skola English in London is a private English language school, located in Oxford Street, London. It was established in 1970 and is part of the Skola group of schools. The proprietor is the majority shareholder and established the group in 1968. The group consists of Skola English in London, Skola Stay Academy in Camden, Skola English in Exeter and two international schools – a primary and secondary school.

1.2 The school's goal is to provide the highest possible quality tuition to their international body of students. It offers general English courses, preparation courses for the International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) examination, a one-year pre-university programme and a certificate level English teacher training course. Numbers of students increase significantly during the summer months.

1.3 At the time of the visit there were 81 students enrolled, 18 aged under 18 and no Tier 4 students. All of the students do not have English as a first language. Students come from a wide variety of countries, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Taiwan, Morocco, Russia, Ukraine, Argentina, Turkey and several European countries. There are slightly more female than male students and no students have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Students are allocated to relevant courses and levels following an initial test.

1.4 This monitoring visit has been extended due to the acquisition of new premises and a change of principal. For this reason Sections 4 and 5 of the Educational Oversight Framework will be looked at in detail.

1.5 The language school was previously inspected on 3 September 2013 when it met all key standards and the quality of education was judged to exceed expectations. The main action points and recommendations from the previous report are:

- Formalise the recording and follow up of goal setting on the ILPs to ensure that goals are achieved.
- Expand CPD provision to include more regular opportunities for teachers to better support classroom practice, and formally record CPD participation.
- Develop safeguarding measures at the premises in Skola at Stay Academy to ensure the safety of all students under the age of 18.
- Implement a system for collating and analysing all student feedback data systematically to enhance improvements to quality.
2. **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

2.1 **The language school exceeds expectations.** At the previous inspection of 3 September 2013 the language school 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. Course provision is excellent and all courses on offer to Tier 4 students lead to qualifications and outcomes which meet Home Office requirements. Students make very good progress in their learning. Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are used appropriately and provide students with very good support. The better ILPs contain specific targets for improvement which can be easily measured by teachers. The quality of teaching is good; lessons are very well planned and written work is corrected thoroughly and constructive feedback provided. Where progress is good, pace is brisk, students are fully engaged, errors are corrected consistently and the learning of more advanced students is successfully addressed in order to extend their learning.

2.3 Welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. The school has effective policies and procedures in place including those for fire safety, first aid and safeguarding measures for students aged under 18. These are comprehensive and implemented robustly to ensure the well-being of students and staff. The premises are fit for purpose, secure and well maintained. Students residing at the Stay Academy are very well cared for to ensure their well being and safety. Induction is comprehensive and effectively prepares students for their studies. Pastoral care is very good. Consequently, students feel safe and well supported. Registration and attendance are accurately recorded and closely monitored. Appropriate procedures are in place for reporting the absence of Tier 4 students to the Home Office.

2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The school leadership has a clear strategic direction which is reflected in the quality of education provided. Self-evaluation is effective and accurately identifies priorities for improvement. These priorities are closely monitored to ensure they are successfully carried out. Relations between the proprietor, principal and staff are extremely positive which promote the fulfilment of the school’s aims and ethos. Student feedback data is efficiently collated and analysed to inform school improvement. Results of weekly tests and examination results for individual students are comprehensively compiled to detail their progress. However, this data does not yet include the progress of groups of students to inform overall school performance. The school is very successful in securing high quality staff. Opportunities for staff development are excellent and are provided by a range of in-house and external courses. Participation is accurately recorded and each staff member has an individual development plan which is regularly reviewed and effectively linked to the appraisal system.
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.

3.2 The recommendation in this area from the previous inspection report is:

- Formalise the recording and follow up of goal setting on the ILPs to ensure that goals are achieved.

3.3 Good progress has been made in relation to this recommendation. Each student has an ILP with individual targets which are monitored in the weekly tests and discussed during the fortnightly tutorials. The majority of ILPs contain clear goals for students to achieve which lead to improved learning. However, on occasions the goals set are general in content which makes it difficult for teachers to monitor their completion.

3.4 The school has a clear curriculum policy which is effectively embedded in practice and well supported by plans and schemes of work. These are closely monitored and discussed with teaching staff. In lessons where good or excellent progress is evident, a variety of activities are employed to sustain student interest, provision is made for more advanced students and ample opportunities are given for student participation. Written work is followed by constructive advice on how to improve and errors are corrected in accordance with the school’s correction code. However, in a minority of lessons error correction in class is not always consistently addressed. Teachers’ subject knowledge and the quality of their lesson planning are excellent. Teaching is supported by good quality resources which are used to very good effect. Overall, students make very good progress.

3.5 Initial assessment is very thorough and is used effectively to place students on the most appropriate course. Regular written homework, weekly tests and fortnightly tutorials all contribute to a high level of learning. Data for individual students is comprehensively compiled but is not summarised to indicate the progress of groups of students to facilitate planning and inform whole school performance. Students agree that they make very good progress, however, more advanced students expressed dissatisfaction with the mixed ability of groups in the communication classes which they feel occasionally hampers their progress in oral work.

3.6 Course provision is excellent and courses are well matched to students’ needs and fully meet their expectations and aspirations. All courses on offer to Tier 4 students lead to qualifications and outcomes which meet Home Office requirements.
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 recommendation in this area from the previous inspection report is:

- Develop safeguarding measures at the premises in Skola at Stay Academy to ensure the safety of all students under the age of 18.

4.3 Excellent progress has been made against the recommendation. A comprehensive range of procedures has been introduced in order to ensure the safety of all students under the age of 18. These include: parental consent forms obtained in advance, appropriate checks carried out on staff and a specific taxi company used for airport transfers which specialises in conveying vulnerable passengers. As a result, students report that they feel safe and secure. This view is supported by inspectors.

4.4 Premises, including the new building at Oxford Street, are fit for purpose, well maintained, secure and provide a suitable environment for teaching and learning to take place. The school has very clear and appropriate policies and procedures in place, including those in respect of fire safety and first aid. Written procedures regarding the safeguarding of under18 students are robust and firmly applied in practice to ensure very good care of younger students. These are consistently implemented and updated to ensure relevance. All necessary measures to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards have been taken. Both students and staff confirm that they have been made aware of what to do in the event of a fire. The school has an appropriate number of trained fire marshals and staff trained in first aid.

4.5 The residential accommodation at the Stay Academy for students aged under18 provides a well appointed and secure environment. Provision includes en-suite rooms, and a recreation area containing a cafe/restaurant. Classrooms are clean and well furnished and there are sufficient washrooms for staff and students. The building in Oxford Street is not suitable for students with mobility problems and the school notes this restriction on its web-site.

4.6 All systems for recording registration and attendance are extremely well managed. Admission records are accurately kept and attendance is closely monitored and recorded. Students under the age of 18 are highlighted on class registers and their absence is immediately noted and followed up. Tier 4 students are also noted on registers and there are appropriate procedures in place to inform the Home Office of absence, if required. An appropriate lateness policy is in place and students confirm that this is consistently applied. Attendance for all courses is very high.

4.7 Student induction is thorough and is complemented by a comprehensive student handbook, issued to all students. Consequently, students are very well prepared for their studies. Effective pastoral care is provided by all staff, and students confirm that staff are approachable and willing to provide help at both a personal and an academic level. Students’ learning experienced is enriched by a varied social
programme, which is suitable for adult as well as younger students. All external activities are appropriately risk assessed. Students report that they receive very good advice for further study, career and employment options. Inspectors agree with this view. Relations between staff and students are extremely positive and students have a high regard for their teachers.
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:

- Expand Continuous Professional Development (CPD) provision to include more regular opportunities for teachers to better support classroom practice, and formally record CPD participation.
- Implement a system for collating and analysing all student feedback data systematically to enhance improvements to quality.

5.3 Excellent progress has been made against the first recommendation. Each teacher has an individual plan which records professional development activity on a monthly basis. Any areas identified as weaknesses in formal or informal peer observations are addressed. All CPD participation is meticulously recorded. Consequently, staff development training effectively supports classroom practice and effectively contributes to the good quality of teaching observed.

5.4 Excellent progress has been made against the second recommendation. Students are issued with a questionnaire on day 3 following commencement of their courses in order to ascertain satisfaction with the teaching provision and accommodation. Results are recorded and immediate action taken to address concerns. A further questionnaire is issued on departure. Results are systematically collated, analysed and acted upon to inform school improvement and improve the quality of the provision.

5.5 The school’s leadership has a clear strategic educational direction and provides a comprehensive oversight. This is reflected in the good quality of education, the care of the students and the fulfilment of the school’s aims and objectives. Leaders provide appropriate policies and procedures which are regularly reviewed to ensure sufficiency of resources for the fulfilment of the school’s aims. As a result, appropriate action is taken in respect of course development, maintenance of premises and student welfare. All legal permissions are in place.

5.6 The school’s development plan is effective in identifying priorities for improvement, with realistic timescales for completion. There are very good quality assurance measures in place which contribute to the maintenance of the school’s high standards. Regular management and teachers’ meetings take place enabling staff to contribute to plans for improvement. Teachers confirm that their views are respected and welcomed. Relationships between senior staff and teaching staff are extremely positive.

5.7 The school is successful in recruiting well qualified staff and providing high quality professional development. Lesson observations are effectively linked to the staff appraisal system to form a well planned cycle of staff development.
5.8 The school makes good use of information on individual student’s achievements and their views of the school, to plan and review courses and services.

5.9 The school web-site provides clear information on the curriculum and range of courses offered. This includes details of the complaints procedure which is open and transparent and includes the name of an external adjudicator. Records of complaints are recorded and the school makes every effort to resolve concerns, should they arise.
6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The language school has maintained the excellent quality found at the last inspection.

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Develop students’ ILPs to include specific and measurable targets in order to evidence progress which can be more easily checked in tutorials.
- Provide for the needs of advanced students in the planning of all lessons.
- Collate and analyse the progress data for groups of students in order to identify strengths and weaknesses overall school performance.
- Ensure that errors are consistently corrected in all lessons.
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. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the language school.

Inspectors

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<tr>
<th>Mrs Suzanne Bell</th>
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<td>Ms Christine Powell</td>
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