



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

LONDON ESSEX COLLEGE

Full Name of College	London Essex College
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Email Address	info@lec.ac
Principal	Mr Raheel Bhatti
Proprietor	Mr Raheel Bhatti
Age Range	19+
Total Number of students	248
Numbers by Age and type of study	19+: 248 EFL only: 9 FE only: : 239
Inspection dates	6-8 December 2011

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 London Essex College (LEC) is a privately owned college that provides further and higher education. It was established in December 2003 and teaching commenced in September 2004. The college operates from a single centre located in Charter House in Ilford, Essex. The college defines its aim as bridging the gap between theory and practice.
- 1.2 The work of the college is overseen by a management board and an academic board, both led by three senior leaders. They are supported by the administration manager, course co-ordinators and a data administrator. The college offers a range of courses from level 4 to level 7 in business studies, information technology (IT) and health and social care. English language courses are also offered.
- 1.3 Currently, there are 248 students enrolled onto courses with the majority of students being recruited from Pakistan, the Philippines and India. The college, agents and marketing consultants are responsible for recruiting students. Enrolments are on a termly basis, with three intakes per year. The college caters for students aged 19 and over. Though the college does not provide residential accommodation, it does put the students in touch with landlords from an approved list for the provision of housing.
- 1.4 The student intake is approximately two-thirds male and one-third female. All students are aged 19 and over and the majority of students are aged between 19 and 28. Most students are recruited by agents from their country of origin. There are no students that have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). English is not the first language for all students.

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	2 Meets 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 educational provision meets the needs of the students attending the college. The thorough recruitment and selection processes in place are effective. Induction is rigorous and students are provided with a comprehensive induction handbook which includes information regarding attendance. However, this does not include reference to UK Boarder Agency (UKBA) reporting guidelines regarding attendance. The vast majority of students attending the college successfully complete the programme that they initially registered for. Retention is high across the college, with a very large majority completing the course they started on. Students identified as requiring support in their use of English attend additional lessons to improve their language skills. Students' learning and achievement are good. All teachers provide students with schemes of work and lesson plans, enabling them to develop independent study skills as they use research techniques to prepare for their lessons. Observation of teaching and learning to measure quality and standards within the classroom is not formally undertaken. Assessment of students' work is regular and accurate.
- 2.2 The college provides high quality learning facilities for students in a safe and secure environment. The accommodation is of a good standard; including well-resourced teaching rooms and a multi-faith room for prayer and reflection. The computer laboratories are equipped to a high standard but seating is inadequate. Health and safety is effectively monitored. Systematic completion of registers ensures that attendance is rigorously recorded. The administration team compile regular reports of individual, class and whole college attendance and report issues of non-attendance to UKBA in a timely manner as required. Pastoral support for students is good and they are regularly involved in enrichment activities organised by the college. Students report that they are well supported and enjoy attending the college. Inspectors agree with student views. Procedures for the reporting of bullying and harassment are thorough. To date, there have been no formal complaints regarding bullying or harassment.
- 2.3 Leadership and management meet expectations. The rigorously organised management is effective in the day-to-day running of the college. The proprietor is an active member of the staff team and is involved in all aspects of college life. The introduction of new quality assurance arrangements has already had a positive impact on standards. Staff are experienced and well qualified in their specialist subjects but lessons are often over-directed by teachers. The college website has been developed to a professional standard but does not fully meet the standards for education oversight.

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 college is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the quality and standards in lessons.
2. Update the website so that it meets all the requirements for the provision of information.
3. Include reference to UKBA requirements regarding attendance in the student induction pack.
4. Provide appropriate seating in the computer laboratories to ensure adequate health and safety for students

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

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

- 3.1 The college's recruitment and selection procedures are thorough and meet expectations. Entry criteria, including international English language testing system (IELTS) scores, are rigorously followed and eligibility is carefully checked. All students are interviewed by the academic director, either in person or through an online video call.
- 3.2 Initial assessment is thorough and is used effectively by tutors to plan the educational programme. After acceptance to the college but before commencing a programme of study, students undertake a range of assessments including a test of English language skills. Although students are required to have a satisfactory IELTS score for acceptance onto a course, the college has found that some students require additional support to develop their language skills. Students achieving a low score on the English testing are required to attend support classes to enable them to cope with the requirements of their course. Course tutors are informed of students' attendance at the support classes, enabling them to assess the progress that is being made and to plan lessons to meet students' needs.
- 3.3 Information, advice and guidance provided to students prior to and on enrolment to courses are appropriate. The website is informative and includes detailed information regarding the range of provision; however this is not always accurate. Induction processes are robust. On joining a course, students undertake induction activities for one week. They are given an overview of their courses, the college and life in the UK. They are issued with a helpful induction handbook that documents their rights and responsibilities as a student. This handbook includes the college attendance policy and information regarding health and safety. However, the attendance policy in the induction handbook does not contain required information regarding UKBA attendance requirements. Students find the induction process very helpful in helping them settle into college life.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 The suitability of course provision and the curriculum meet expectations. The students' needs and objectives are well matched to the good range of courses on offer. There are regular reviews of take-up and performance of programmes, which has altered the courses offered over the last three years. Poorly performing courses have been discontinued, as have courses that include a high percentage of work placements that no longer conform to the new UKBA guidelines. The range of courses is now focussed on IT courses at levels 5 and 6, health and social care at level 4 and 5 and business management to level 7. The students are well educated in accordance with their own objectives and the college's aims of bridging the gap between theory and practice.
- 3.5 The college prospectus, marketing materials and website provide comprehensive and detailed information about the programmes available. These materials provide an overview of courses, their content, assessment, IELTS levels required and entry requirements. However, the website and online prospectus contain information about courses such as higher national diploma programmes that are not currently offered by the college.

- 3.6 Most students successfully complete the course that they registered for. Data is regularly analysed and used to inform course development. Managers and teachers use data to identify areas for development to continuously improve provision. The vast majority of students progress to higher level courses, to university or to employment at a higher level in their specialist area.

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

- 3.7 The quality of teaching is satisfactory and students' motivation and diligence mean they progress well. Student learning and achievement are good. Students are highly motivated and engage well in their learning. Teachers plan their lessons adequately and students are provided with a copy of schemes of work and lesson plans. Students are then able to independently undertake pre-reading and research to prepare for their classes. This significantly contributes to their understanding of the topic and to the development of independent learning skills. In lessons where teaching is good, a wide range of teaching and learning strategies are employed to help students to gainfully apply their learning to practical situations and students remain fully engaged. Teachers involve all the students and use effective questioning techniques to assess the progress that is being made. A minority of lessons are overly teacher-led and teachers do not check if learning is taking place. Students with language support needs are effectively identified through initial assessment and monitoring of their progress in class. They attend additional English language classes that suitably develop their skills and support their progress on the course.
- 3.8 Teachers plan for all lessons but there is some variability in planning documents. For example, schemes of work and lesson plans range from very thorough with good regard for students' individual learning needs to a very brief overview of the content of the sessions. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and are well qualified in their subject areas. A minority of teachers have teaching qualifications.
- 3.9 Assessment practices across the college are satisfactory overall. Assessment of students' work is accurate and matches the criteria set by the awarding body. Written feedback to students is adequate but weaker feedback does not always identify key learning and support needs of all learners or what they need to do to improve in the future.

3.(d) Progress and attainment

- 3.10 Student progress and attainment meets requirements. Success rates are high. The organisation of travel, tourism and hospitality executives course, which was underperforming in 2009/10, has improved success rates by 21 per cent in 2010/11. However, the college did not feel that the course had improved enough and have withdrawn it from the curriculum offer. Students comment on the good progress they make and the usefulness of completing homework on a regular basis in helping them to prepare for written assessments. Regular monitoring of students' performance enables the college to provide effective support to enable progress to take place. Courses provide clear progression routes to higher level programmes within the college or to full degree and postgraduate courses at link universities. All courses lead to a UKBA approved qualification.
- 3.11 Students develop their practical skills and knowledge through a wide range of activities. For example, the IT students installed computers, appropriate software and network facilities for the college's computer laboratory, which meets the college aim of bridging the gap between theory and practice.

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 Health and safety policies and procedures are appropriate and security arrangements within the college are rigorous. Fire safety is regularly monitored and a fire evacuation drill was effectively executed during the inspection. Risk assessment is thorough and hazards that have been identified are swiftly minimised. First aid procedures are good, with a written first aid policy and four suitably qualified first aiders. During the induction process, students are provided with comprehensive information regarding health and safety. This includes the names of staff trained in first aid, the location of first aid boxes, fire safety and fire evacuation procedures, and other potential health and safety hazards. Provision and support for students that are injured or ill are good.
- 4.2 Accommodation is spacious and is fit for purpose. There are six large classrooms where teaching and learning takes place. All rooms are large with good quality furniture and are in good decorative order. The students can use two computer laboratories, each containing 15 computers. However, the chairs used in the computer laboratories are incompatible for use with computers and do not ensure adequate health and safety for students. There is a small lending library at the college, and students are also encouraged to visit the local library. A multi-faith room offers an appropriate space for prayer and reflective activities. Students benefit from the use of a large refectory area with microwave ovens, a water dispenser, a fridge and vending machines.
- 4.3 Provision is in place to cater for students with language difficulties and learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD), including lifts from the ground floor to the college area and wide doorframes to permit access of wheelchairs to the classroom.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.4 Student registration and attendance are good and meet expectations. Timely input of attendance on to the management information system accurately identifies students that are at risk of failing to meet UKBA requirements or discontinuing study. Registers are completed for both morning and afternoon sessions. Students failing to attend either a morning or afternoon session are contacted by the student welfare officer but are counted as having a contact with the college for that day. As students attend college for two days per week, this means that they can be absent for five weeks before UKBA is contacted.
- 4.5 The detailed attendance policy issued to students includes information about students' roles and responsibilities but does not include UKBA guidelines for a report after failure to make 10 expected contacts. Current attendance across all courses stands at 91 per cent. However, during the inspection there were high levels of absence. The college attributed this high level to it being the final week of term before the holiday and some students had travelled to their home country and it was a time of a religious celebration. The majority of students have authorised absences to enable them to participate in religious observances or to make visits home. Documentation for this is very thorough, with each student following college protocols for the formal request of an authorised absence.
- 4.6 Records of enrolments, attendance and course completions are accurate and are effectively maintained by the administration manager using a bespoke management

information system. Monitoring of attendance and liaison with the UKBA is the responsibility of the administration manager who effectively carries out these responsibilities. Clear policies and procedures have been implemented regarding the collection and refund of fees and deposits to students.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.7 Pastoral support and guidance for students meets expectations and is in keeping with the aims of the college. Information, advice and guidance are provided throughout the students' time at college and allow them to effectively plan for their next steps in education and employment. Induction at the college is thorough, taking place during the first week after enrolment onto courses. The tutorial process provides an overview of student roles and responsibilities. It also provides them with detailed information regarding the rigour of their courses, including assessment and verification processes. When students are nearing the end of their programme the college helps them to make informed choices for progression onto further educational programmes.
- 4.8 Support from the students' welfare officer is strong and is provided for those students requiring support for personal and financial issues. Personal tutors are also readily available to provide support, advice and guidance. Students report that they are satisfied with the level of pastoral support that they receive from staff. The bullying and harassment policy that is in place is informative and, should students have a concern, outlines the process for reporting issues. To date, there have been no formal complaints received by the college.
- 4.9 Relationships between teachers and students and amongst the student body are good. The college has a range of extra-curricular activities including discos, Christmas and end of year parties and visits and trips to places such as theme parks. Students also socialise outside of college and feel that they are now more knowledgeable about other students' cultures and beliefs. Staff, including senior managers, are always readily available and students are aware of the key contacts to go to if they have any concerns. Students' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive. They feel that they are well supported by staff and their peers. Most students would recommend the college to a friend.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight meet expectations, and the newly defined management team fulfil their responsibilities well. The proprietor has a clear focus on educational standards and has invested wisely in staff, accommodation and resources with careful financial planning and oversight.
- 5.2 The proprietor is actively engaged in the day-to-day management of the college. He works effectively with staff to monitor standards and the performance of the college. Staff recruitment and the appraisal process are also overseen by the proprietor to ensure that high standards are maintained and requirements met.
- 5.3 Health and safety policies and procedures within the college are appropriate. Working with the health and safety manager, the proprietor ensures that the premises and environment are of an acceptable standard and meet requirements for students. The welfare and well-being of the students is closely monitored by the student welfare officer.
- 5.4 The college has legal permissions for its work including D1 planning permission to use the premises as a college, a valid Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) certificate and insurance cover.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.5 The proprietor, who plays an active role in the running of the college, fulfils all legal duties. The working relationships between the three senior leaders are good and all have contributed to the college's strategic plan. They regularly review the provision and the curriculum on offer, developing it appropriately to meet the needs of the students. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and has been used to identify strengths and areas of provision and practice that need improvement. The results of the self-evaluation are used in setting the targets, aims and actions of the strategic plan, which provides a focus for continuing improvement of college provision.
- 5.6 Regular minuted staff meetings ensure that communication is effective across all levels of staff. Actions from meetings are allocated to individual staff and are reviewed at the next meeting to check that they have been completed to a satisfactory standard. Curriculum review is a standing agenda item and all aspects of the provision are rigorously monitored. Extra-curricular activities such as trips, visits and college parties complement students' academic studies. Students are very positive about their experience at the college and this is reflected in the retention and success rates.
- 5.7 A thorough and rigorous recruitment process is employed by the college. Before being offered employment, teaching applicants undertake a series of assessment activities that includes the delivery of a teaching session and other associated activities. The senior leadership team use this comprehensive recruitment process to attract suitable, high quality staff. Continuing professional development activities for staff are satisfactory. They are able to access update-training from awarding bodies and organisations such as Accreditation Services for International Colleges (ASIC) and the UKBA. There are also plans for tutors to undertake the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) qualification to support and develop teaching skills. During their induction, all staff undertake training to ensure that the needs of

students, their welfare and health and safety are adequately met. Staff are appraised annually, targets for the coming year are set and are reviewed regularly.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.8 Quality assurance meets expectations. A thorough quality assurance manual was developed in 2011 but now needs to be put into practice. Quality assurance systems have very recently been introduced and are already having a positive outcome on standards and achievement, particularly in the area of assessment, which is now improving outcomes within the college. Regular subject reviews provide the college with accurate information regarding the performance of individual programmes. If a course is underperforming and actions put in place are not adequately addressing the issues of underperformance, the course is then withdrawn. Analysis of data shows an improving trend in achievement with the vast majority of courses having high success rates.
- 5.9 Feedback from students and staff is regularly collected and analysed to evaluate quality and standards within the college. Evaluations are completed by students at the end of every unit and at the end of year. Senior managers also seek feedback from students regarding the perceived performance of teachers. However, there is no indicator of the accuracy of this as the college does not undertake formal observations of teaching and learning to assess quality and standards in the classroom.
- 5.10 The robust complaints, bullying and harassment policies and procedures are well-known to the students. All stages of the complaints process are clearly identified with timescales for actions. There have been no formal complaints made to date and students indicate that they would try to resolve any issue informally before embarking on a formal complaint.
- 5.11 Results from pre-inspection questionnaires to students are extremely positive, with all students reporting that they enjoy their time at the college and are well supported by staff. Inspectors agree with student views.

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

- 5.12 Staff eligibility for employment at the college is thoroughly checked before an offer of employment is made. Recruitment and selection is comprehensive and ability to teach is also assessed before teachers can take up their posts. All staff have high-level subject qualifications that enables them to teach across all levels of programmes. They have access to continuing professional development opportunities to develop and refresh their skills. Induction processes for new staff are comprehensive.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.13 The provision of information is satisfactory. The website is user-friendly, of good quality and includes useful information about the college. However, it does not contain the range of information required in the educational oversight standards. Elements of the website are inaccurate, including the prospectus, which contains information regarding courses that are not currently being offered. There are no details of academic performance, the complaints procedures or policies to meet the standards for educational oversight.

- 5.14 During the inspection, the college provided a range of information required by the inspectors to support them in carrying out the educational oversight inspection.

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 pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mrs Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones	Lead Inspector
Ms Abigail Nwaokolo	Team Inspector
Mr Paul McGregor	Team Inspector