



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

**LANGUAGE IN TOTNES**

Full Name of College **Language in Totnes**  
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Principal Mr Daniel Luly  
Proprietor Ms Margie Barker  
Age Range 16+  
Total Number of students 42

Numbers by age and type of study  
16-18: 4  
19+: 38  
EFL only: 42

Inspection dates **2-4 November 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 Language in Totnes is a private English language school which was established in 1980 as a partnership. It became a limited company in February 2010 and is now part of the Language in Group. The current director is the proprietor of the school which she owns with a non-active business partner. The school's stated promise to its students is "to help you to set and then reach English language goals which are based on your needs and achieved with the help of our expertise." The school appointed a full-time school manager in April 2011.
- 1.2 The school's activities are seasonal. It has the largest number of students during the summer season when it offers junior English language courses for students aged between 6 and 17. It also offers adult programmes to students over the age of 16 throughout the year as well as customised courses to school groups between the ages of 12 and 17 outside the summer season. The school is located in the centre of Totnes in Devon. It occupies a listed building in the main high street.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 42 students enrolled of whom four were studying under Tier 4 general student visas. Enrolment goes down to around 30 students in January and increases to around 180 adult students and 260 junior students in the summer.
- 1.4 When an individual applies to join a course the school checks that they are suitable for their chosen course through the use of a pre-course questionnaire and testing on arrival. The current profile of students enrolling at the school includes work experience students who are seeking to improve their job prospects; long-term students who are either school or university students or mature professionals and short-term students, mainly from Europe, who come for both professional and recreational reasons. The current student population are aged over 18 with the exception of four who are 17. There are slightly more males than females. A wide range of nationalities and languages is represented including Colombian, French, Russian, Swedish, Turkish, Swiss, South Korean, German, Saudi and Italian. There are no students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

## 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	1 Exceeds expectations
4.	Students' welfare, including health and safety	1 Exceeds expectations
5.	The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	1 Exceeds expectations

2.1 Language in Totnes is very successful in meeting its aims. It places students on the right courses for their level of ability and in accordance with their learning goals. Students are therefore satisfied with the courses they are undertaking and are successful in them. The curriculum is very good and at the right level. The quality of teaching and learning at the school is excellent. Teaching engages learners and as a result students display high levels of motivation and good levels of attainment in line with their goals. Monitoring of the students' progress is highly effective through the use of good tutorial sessions. The data collected from assessment is not used as effectively as it could be. At present, the college does not use end of course tests on non-examined courses to evaluate progress.

2.2 The school provides an excellent environment for learning with comfortable teaching rooms and common areas. There are very effective arrangements for ensuring the health, safety and security of students, including those who are under 18 years of age, when in the school, on excursions and in home-stay accommodation. Students reported that they feel very safe and secure at the school. They know their teachers well and relationships at the school are excellent. Students can approach the staff at any time with either an academic or personal issue and are very well supported.

2.3 Governance and leadership are very effective. The management team works closely together and with the rest of the staff to ensure high standards of quality are delivered to the students. There is therefore a shared commitment and a clear vision for the future. The school makes good use of the feedback it receives from students to continually improve its procedures and operation. Teaching staff are qualified and all staff are supported in their future development. There is excellent provision of information through the school's website although this does not yet include details of the school's health and safety and safeguarding policies.

### 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 standards for private further education colleges and quality is high. The college **exceeds expectations for the quality of education.**

#### (ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Collate the range of progress data available so that it can be used more effectively for identifying weaknesses and further improving outcomes for students.
2. Improve end of course assessment for non-examined courses.
3. Include on risk assessments a note of any follow-up action taken in relation to issues raised.
4. Add copies of the school's health and safety and safeguarding policies to the website.
5. Add information in relation to safeguarding to the employee handbook and include as a standing item on all relevant meetings

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

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

3.1 The assessment of students prior to and on arrival is very good. The school undertakes accurate and clear assessments of students' suitability prior to arrival by means of a pre-course questionnaire and, on arrival, through both written and oral testing. This provides the school with good information to identify the level of competence of the student and any additional support required. Assessment on arrival is well planned and managed. Students are placed on classes at the appropriate level for their ability and there is flexibility to move between classes if necessary.

The resulting assessment information is used very effectively by teachers who receive clear information on each student's ability in the form of an initial student profile. They use this information to adapt their teaching and support to match students' needs. Students are monitored regularly to ensure that they continue to receive teaching and support at the right level. Initial information, advice and guidance provided are accurate and thorough.

#### **3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum**

3.2 The courses and curriculum are excellent. Students are well educated in accordance with their objectives and the school's aims. There is a clear written statement of educational purpose which is well supported by appropriate schemes of work. These are implemented effectively in order to meet the differing objectives of the students and in accordance with their age, aptitudes and language capabilities. Students are very well supported, with close monitoring and assessment of their progress. For the small number of students under the age of 18, there is good preparation for adult life through careful planning of teaching and the integration of appropriate social activities.

3.3 Courses are well matched to the students' different needs and objectives. Teachers adapt the materials and activities to meet the varying needs of the students and provide opportunities for enrichment activities, including work experience in a variety of local businesses. Students are actively involved in the planning and evaluation of their courses through on-going discussion in tutorial sessions. Tutorial sessions are dedicated to specific monitoring of their progress and enjoyment of the course. The school provides regular customised individual tutorial time which is valued highly by students. There are opportunities for one-to-one lessons and to join a class of no more than three students for a highly individualised approach.

3.4 The courses are supplemented by opportunities to meet other students for conversation practice and discussion of topical issues which contribute to their social and cultural development and encourage independent thinking. At these sessions students are encouraged to borrow books and CDs for independent study and application of learning. All students complete the course they initially register for.

3.5 The website and prospectus give a clear and accurate description of the courses being offered. Taken with the high quality of welfare and support, this means that the retention of students on the original programme is very high.

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

- 3.6 The quality of teaching is excellent overall. In the classes observed nearly all of the teaching was good or excellent and none was unsatisfactory. As a result students make excellent progress according to their ability and starting points.
- 3.7 Most lessons are well planned and use effective teaching methods with a suitable range and variety of activities to meet the needs of the students. Lessons have clear and focused objectives, time is well managed and teachers demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. There is on-going assessment of students' progress which is used to plan effectively and encourage independent learning and independence of thought. Teachers use different resources such as pictures, the internet and a variety of articles, which enhance learning and promote cultural awareness and diversity. Teachers know their students well and are highly supportive. A very positive relationship is evident between students and teachers. Teachers are very encouraging and provide highly constructive feedback which encourages and builds the confidence of the students. Students therefore demonstrate high levels of self-esteem and confidence and participate fully in class discussions.
- 3.8 In some classes, the high level of discussion, supported by excellent and imaginative teaching methods and aids, enables highly effective learning to take place. Teaching provides appropriate levels of challenge for high achievers as well as support for weaker learners. In the best lessons, the teachers had an excellent knowledge of the previous learning of the students and were able to extend their vocabulary quickly, and to encourage the use of idiomatic expressions and sophisticated language.
- 3.9 Assessment of the students' progress is good. Teachers use a tracking form which contains grades for individual progress and is reviewed at each weekly tutorial session. It provides a good record of general progress, but does not contain individual learning goals for the future which are regularly reviewed. This means that the tutorial support provided is not always as focused and consistent as it could be. Homework tasks are set regularly to cover a range of English language skills. Written homework is marked and appropriate feedback and corrections are provided. Students who wish to have a qualification in order to progress to a higher level of education or to enhance their career prospects are encouraged to take the relevant examination. There is no final testing of students on non-examined courses, which means that the school has no clear record of the overall progress that has been made. The school has some high quality data on attainment whilst on courses, but these are not systematically collated or used to evaluate performance. Information about students' progress is communicated to relevant parties such as parents and sponsors.

### **3.(d) Progress and attainment**

- 3.10 Attainment and progress are excellent. Most students make excellent progress in line with their individual learning goals and within a relatively short timescale in the case of some of the courses offered. They develop excellent skills, knowledge and understanding that are relevant to meeting their core objectives, which are to master the skill of speaking the English language confidently. The numbers taking examinations are small. In 2009 a total of eight students sat examinations, in 2010 the number was sixteen and so far in 2011 it is six. All those taking examinations were successful. The inspectors were advised that the reduction in number in 2011 compared to 2010 is because it is possible to take the examinations on-line once a student has returned home. Most students come to the school, often on short

courses, to improve their spoken English rather than to take examinations. Students demonstrate very high levels of skill and learning in the classroom. In some of the classes excellent language fluency and a very good grasp of idiomatic vocabulary were developed for example when discussing current aspects of British culture. Most of the students display very high levels of motivation and a strong desire to succeed which promotes learning and development. Attendance rates in classes are very high.

## **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 The health, safety and security of the premises have a high priority. The premises, located in a historic listed building, provide an excellent learning environment for students and an appropriate and professional environment for staff. The classrooms are light and spacious and the general condition of the building is excellent. Toilet facilities are adequate in number and are clean and well maintained.
- 4.2 The arrangements for ensuring the health and safety and security of students and staff are highly effective. Students report that they feel safe and secure when at the school and can raise any issues with the school's staff, which are acted upon promptly. There is an appropriate health and safety policy statement in place as well as an up-to-date risk assessment covering general and fire risks. Appropriate individual risk assessments are carried out for off-site activities. However, it is not always made clear what follow-up action has been carried out in relation to any actions arising from risk assessments. Otherwise, very good and comprehensive records of health and safety checks are kept.
- 4.3 Adequate numbers of trained fire marshals and first aiders are in place as well as first aid kits and an accident book. Students are made aware of their responsibilities in regard to health and safety at induction and when they go on excursions. There are fire action notices on display throughout the premises and the fire exits are well signposted. Fire protection equipment is appropriately sited and regularly checked.
- 4.4 Appropriate provision is made for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those who are unwell or injured. Specialised first aid kits are provided for off-site excursions. The staff are highly responsive to individual needs and there is a disability policy in place which provides for action to be taken as required.

### **4.(b) Student registration and attendance records**

- 4.5 The student registration and attendance records are well kept. Registration and attendance are very well managed and records of enrolments, attendance and course completion rates are highly accurate and maintained with good attention to detail. Attendance is recorded on daily registers which are held on the school's database. Staff have good knowledge of the whereabouts of all the students in their care. There is a comprehensive attendance policy and clear procedures for contacting students who miss classes. Any action taken is swift and appropriate. There is a rigorous approach to monitoring punctuality. In the case of students under the age of 18, proper contact is made with the parents. All contacts are recorded on the database.
- 4.6 Clear procedures exist for the collection and refund of fees and deposits. These are provided on the school's website and all actions are recorded on the school's database.
- 4.7 Staff have good knowledge of UKBA requirements in regard to attendance. A range of appropriate policies is in place, including on attendance and UKBA reporting requirements, and template letters to be used if required.

#### **4.(c) Pastoral support for students**

- 4.8 The arrangements for the pastoral support of students are excellent. Students receive very good initial advice and guidance which means that they are placed on a course which is appropriate to their needs. Weekly tutorials provide excellent one to one pastoral care for students. Focused advice is provided to address any identified problems and students appreciate the individual time with teachers and the opportunity to raise any pastoral or academic issues. Students report that they can approach staff with concerns at any time. The school's database contains a health and welfare section which is used to record issues raised.
- 4.9 Relationships between students and staff and between the students themselves are excellent. Staff know the students very well and there is an open and supportive culture throughout the school that encourages open communication at all levels. The responses from students to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive with regard to the support they receive from the school's staff. All the students responding to the questionnaire felt that they get individual support from teachers when they need it and that relationships at the school are positive. Inspection supports this view of the school.
- 4.10 Mutual respect and tolerance exists amongst students and between students and staff. This is supported by appropriate policies and procedures to prevent bullying, harassment and other forms of discrimination. In response to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaires, students confirmed this positive view and no significant concerns were raised.
- 4.11 Students receive appropriate help to decide on future study and careers options. Links with local businesses are strong and provide possibilities for work experience and advice on job opportunities.

#### **4.(d) Child protection**

- 4.12 The safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 are appropriate and have regard to official guidance. A range of suitable policies are in place and these are effectively implemented, including the very clear curfew rules. Parents and carers are closely involved in the safeguarding procedures and receive regular reports on a student's progress. They sign a code of conduct which is returned before the student comes to the school. There is a designated child protection officer who is appropriately trained. All staff have an awareness of safeguarding issues because the general culture of the school supports a strong focus on care for all students and particularly for those under 18. Policies and procedures on safeguarding and child protection are in place, and are implemented. However, there is no specific mention of safeguarding arrangements in the employee handbook and it is not regularly discussed at all staff meetings.
- 4.13 Staff have the necessary checks including members of staff who accompany students on off-site excursions and these are kept up-to-date. Accurate records of checks are kept on the school's database so that they can be effectively monitored. Records are also maintained in staff files. Appropriate emergency contact details are recorded.

#### **4.(e) Residential accommodation**

- 4.14 The arrangements for home-stay accommodation are of very good quality. A rigorous and stringent approach to host family placements is taken, with care and attention being given to ensure the best possible experience for students. The

school's electronic database contains matching criteria which are used very effectively in the organisation of home-stay accommodation. Students are therefore extremely well matched to home-stay families according to their needs and requirements. As a result students report that they are very satisfied with their host families. Students provide early feedback on any issues so that these can be immediately rectified. Regular spot checks are carried out.

- 4.15 Many host families already have the appropriate checks in place for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18. All new host families are required to undergo Criminal Records Bureau checks and the costs are being shared with the school. Detailed records of home-stay arrangements are maintained.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) Ownership and oversight**

5.1 The school is well governed, with effective oversight by the main proprietor who, as director, is closely involved with the day-to-day leadership of the school. The oversight provided is extremely effective in helping the school to achieve its stated aim of helping students to set and achieve learning goals which are based on their needs. There is a strong focus on overseeing the quality of the education provided to students as well as investing in the development of the skills of the staff. The governance arrangements ensure that senior managers are well supported in carrying out their roles. They are also challenged to introduce improvements to achieve higher levels of quality and growth. The self-evaluation report demonstrates an open approach to setting areas for improvement and development.

The governance ensures that the school meets its statutory obligations for safeguarding, welfare and health and safety successfully. There is a strong focus on caring for students which runs through the whole school and particularly in relation to those under the age of 18. The school has appropriate legal permissions including appropriate use for the premises and relevant licences and insurance.

### **5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities**

5.2 The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The team demonstrate a strong commitment to the school's aims and have a clear vision for the future. Clear operational plans are in place to ensure that appropriate action is taken with regard to course development, maintenance of the school's premises and student welfare and accommodation, including for students under the age of 18. Actions are delegated to the appropriate member of staff. Steps are being taken to further strengthen the management team with the appointment of a full-time permanent director of studies.

5.3 Communication is excellent and leaders and managers are highly effective in sharing information with the rest of the team and seeking their feedback. Clear educational direction is provided, with a focus on maintaining high educational standards as reflected in the achievement of students and the standard of their personal development. The leadership and management are very good at self-evaluation and ensuring that actions for improvement are implemented.

5.4 Management is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating high-quality staff. Teachers express their appreciation of the responsiveness of the management team. They are well supported through opportunities for continuing professional development and on-going training, and this is evident in the high quality of both the teaching and non-teaching staff. Staff have regular performance appraisals and undergo regular observations of their teaching. They receive good feedback on their strengths and areas for development.

### **5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback**

5.5 The arrangements for quality assurance and self-evaluation are very effective. The management and leadership set high standards of performance within a highly positive and supportive culture. Quality assurance is supported by a range of excellent quality policies and procedures which are implemented very well. Very good use is made of student feedback to judge the effectiveness of the school's

management in meeting the needs of students. Students are asked for feedback throughout their stay at the school and regular reports are produced for discussion at staff meetings so that appropriate action can be taken. Students' feedback is also communicated to individual teachers when appropriate. An analysis of the feedback is shared with the students so that they are aware of how the school is performing overall.

- 5.6 A detailed complaints policy is communicated openly. Any complaints are handled efficiently as they arise.
- 5.7 The students' views of the school are extremely positive, with all students who responded to the confidential questionnaire either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements made. All students who responded would recommend the school to others. No serious concerns were expressed and the inspection confirmed the students' views.

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

- 5.8 Staff recruitment procedures, including all required recruitment checks, are satisfactorily completed. Effective procedures are in place for the recruitment of all staff and there is a good induction programme provided on arrival. Appropriate employment contracts are issued. Appropriate suitability checks are carried out for all staff including the proprietor. Qualifications are checked, references are taken up and appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are made including for those working with students under the age of 18. New staff are also asked to sign a declaration of fitness to work at the school. Records of checks are kept on staff files and electronically. There have been no instances of disciplinary action, suspension or departure of staff due to failure to comply with legal requirements.

#### **5.(e) Provision of information**

- 5.9 The provision of information to students is very thorough. The school's website and prospectus are clear and engaging and provide comprehensive and detailed information about the school for students and prospective students. However, the website does not contain details of the school's policies relating to health and safety or safeguarding, though these are made available to students.
- 5.10 The provision of information for the inspection was excellent. The school was ready with all information in connection with the inspection and made available all necessary documentation relating to current staff, including records of checks made.

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with 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 school.

### Inspectors

Ms Diana Morriss	Lead Inspector
Mrs Flora Bean	Team Inspector