



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

EF LANGUAGE SCHOOLS LTD - CAMBRIDGE

(Company registration no. – 1043158)

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Accreditation and Compliance Director	Ms Ruth Chambers		
Proprietor	EF Language Schools Limited		
Age Range	12+		
Total number of students	1302		
Numbers by age and type of study	Under 16:	0	
	16-17:	197	
	18+:	1105	
	EFL only:	1230	
	FE only:	72	
Inspection dates	9 to 11 December 2025		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language schools. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the institution's educational provision.

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 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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT	2
2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS	5
(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival	5
(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum	5
(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning	6
(d) Attainment and progress	6
4 STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY	7
(a) Health, safety and security of the premises	7
(b) Student registration and attendance records	7
(c) Pastoral support for students	8
(d) Safeguarding for under 18s	8
(e) Residential accommodation	9
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	10
(a) Ownership and oversight	10
(b) Management structures and responsibilities	10
(c) Quality assurance including student feedback	10
(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks	11
(e) Provision of information	11
6 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	12
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	13

1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 EF Education was founded in 1965 by Bertil Hult and is still privately owned by the Hult family. EF Language Schools was founded in 1977 and currently operates eight schools in the UK and Ireland. The inspection of EF Language Schools focused on the four private English Language schools located in Cambridge, London, Oxford and Manchester. The UK schools are accredited by the British Council and are members of English UK.
- 1.2 Each school is managed by an operations manager who reports to the central EF schools' operations team. EF directors provide support to school directors in key areas, including academics, accreditation, and compliance. This operations team reports to the Executive Director of Operations for the UK and Ireland, who is based in the UK.
- 1.3 The organisation aims to open the world through education, and it is committed to providing a supportive, friendly and nurturing environment where students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds can learn most effectively.
- 1.4 EF Language Schools offer general English language courses, from foundation to proficiency levels, as well as exam preparation for the Cambridge suite of examinations, running for 1 to 52 weeks. They also offer junior courses and English language teacher training. Two schools, Manchester and Oxford, offer 6 to 11 month university preparation foundation-year courses.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection, the number of students registered at the four schools was 1302. A majority of students were female. Students come from an extensive range of countries. English is an additional language for all students. There were 72 students enrolled who were studying on Student Visas. Eleven students had been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.6 Applications are either direct to a school, through the group's global network of recruitment offices, or via approved agents. The application process confirms the candidate's suitability. Students can enrol at any time of year. Students following a university foundation year course join termly and are accepted following confirmation of their qualifications and English language checks.
- 1.7 The schools offer a broad range of accommodation, including residences and with homestay providers.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The school exceeds expectations.** At the time of the inspection, all Key Standards for Educational Oversight were met, and the quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Academic managers use assessment information to match students to courses that meet their needs and aptitudes very well. Arrangements to meet the needs of students who have specific learning needs are highly effective. The curriculum is very well planned and sequenced to ensure that students make excellent progress towards meeting their educational goals. Courses offered to students on Student Visas meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. The overall quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers present new English vocabulary effectively, providing excellent opportunities for students to practise newly acquired language. Teachers have access to a broad range of high-quality digital learning resources to use in lessons with students. However, not all teachers are consistently exploiting the benefits of these resources to challenge all students. Assessment of learning is highly effective. Attainment and progress are excellent. Students are very well supported by academic managers, teachers and through tutorials to make substantial progress from their starting points. Overall achievement rates are high and in most schools they are improving. Most students on the university pathway programme progress to a course at their chosen university.
- 2.3 Arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of students are excellent. Overall, leaders have implemented highly effective arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. The school has a good level of fire safety which conforms to legal requirements. Systematic risk assessment processes help managers and teachers put in place adequate control measures to keep staff and students safe in school and on external trips and visits. Record keeping is mostly thorough. However, records of the health and safety checks at the Manchester school are not as meticulously maintained as in the other schools. Staff and students benefit from well-maintained, appropriately decorated, and clean premises that provide a comfortable environment for learning and work. Managers maintain a highly accurate admission register. Attendance records are accurate and ensure staff have a clear understanding of the whereabouts of students on the register. Leaders make the necessary reports when a student fails to enrol or otherwise discontinues study or does not fulfil Home Office requirements for attendance. A small minority of students have attendance which does not meet EF's minimum expectations. Pastoral support is excellent. Appropriate academic and welfare support interventions are put in place swiftly, where needed. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Residential accommodation is good. Most students are satisfied with the quality of their accommodation.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. Senior leaders set a clear, consistent educational direction, ensuring that students at each school benefit from a high standard of education and care. Senior leaders have excellent insight into each school's performance. They discharge their responsibilities for safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety very effectively. There are very

effective working relationships between senior leaders, the operations team and school directors. Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. Academic managers have rigorous processes in place to ensure students benefit from a high standard of teaching. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Leaders collect and analyse performance data to assess and monitor student progress over time. Leaders have recently identified how they can better use attainment data at each school to improve student achievement rates further. However, it is too soon to measure the full impact of these measures. Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are excellent. The provision of information is excellent.

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

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

- 3.1 The assessment of students prior to or on arrival is excellent. Initial assessments are systematically conducted and are effective in identifying students' language capabilities. Academic managers use assessment information to match students to courses that meet their needs and aptitudes very well.
- 3.2 The schools use a very effective management information system that ensures all teachers are well informed about each student's needs at the start of their course. Teachers use this information well to adapt their lessons accordingly. As a result, students are well supported and the number of students who leave their course early is very low.
- 3.3 Students are provided with accurate information, advice and guidance about the school and the curriculum on offer before they start their studies. This ensures that students can make informed choices about where and what to study.
- 3.4 Arrangements to meet the needs of students who have specific learning needs are highly effective. Students' specific needs are identified promptly before or on arrival. Relevant adjustments and support arrangements are put in place swiftly when required. As a result, students are well supported to make progress and achieve.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.5 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. Students are well educated in accordance with EF's aims and their own objectives. The curriculum is very well planned and sequenced to ensure that students make excellent progress towards meeting their educational goals.
- 3.6 University preparation courses are very effective in helping students transition to higher education. General English courses are offered across the full range of levels and are well aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This ensures that students with varying language abilities are well catered for at each school. A range of special-interest courses meets students' interests well, developing their language skills and subject knowledge in more specialised areas, such as public speaking, journalism and global issues.
- 3.7 Programmes of study on offer to students on Student Visas meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. The schools ensure that students enrolled on Student Visas are studying at an appropriate level on an approved full-time programme which includes at least 15 hours a week of classroom-based, weekday daytime study.

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

- 3.8 The overall quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers are qualified subject specialists who use their expertise to plan and deliver effective lessons which ensure students make substantial progress in developing their skills.
- 3.9 Teachers present new language effectively, providing excellent opportunities for students to practise newly acquired language. Teachers effectively correct pronunciation and develop students' vocabulary. Teachers use an excellent range of student-centred activities, such as projects, group work, and peer assessments, which engage most students and help keep them motivated and focused in lessons.
- 3.10 Teachers have access to a broad range of high-quality digital learning resources to use in lessons with students. However, not all teachers are consistently exploiting the benefits of these resources to challenge all students. Students benefit from high-quality, engaging learning resources that help them practise their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in meaningful contexts. Extensive interactive online learning resources are very well matched to students' language capabilities. They help students extend and consolidate their learning outside the classroom, developing their skills as independent learners.
- 3.11 Teachers quickly build a respectful, supportive rapport with their students. Teachers use meaningful opportunities in lessons to help develop students' understanding of British life and culture, as well as encouraging students to share aspects of their own cultures and traditions. The teaching does not undermine the Equality Act 2010 or the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 3.12 Assessment of learning is highly effective. Teachers use assessment systemically to check students' understanding and to put in place appropriate academic support. Progress tutorials are used well to help students understand how they are developing their skills and how to improve further. Teachers provide students with clear and constructive feedback, which helps them focus on specific development targets. As a result, students consistently make excellent progress over time.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.13 Attainment and progress are excellent. Students are very well supported by academic managers, teachers and through tutorials to make substantial progress from their starting points. Students on general English courses are very well supported to develop their applied language skills.
- 3.14 Students are well prepared to be successful in their examinations, where relevant. Overall achievement rates are high and in most schools they are improving. Most students on the university pathway programme progress to a course at their chosen university.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

- 4.1 Health, safety and security of the premises are excellent. Overall, leaders have implemented comprehensive policies and procedures for ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. Students are well supported in understanding what to do in the event of an emergency. Students' views on safety matters are collated and addressed through a good range of feedback mechanisms.
- 4.2 The college has a good level of fire safety which conforms to legal requirements. There is a clear, suitable policy on first aid that is effectively implemented. A sufficient number of staff are trained in fire safety and first aid. Managers ensure that firefighting and first aid equipment is regularly serviced and properly maintained. Security arrangements are effective. Systematic risk assessment processes help managers and teachers put in place adequate control measures to keep staff and students safe in school and on external trips and visits. Record keeping is mostly thorough. However, records of the health and safety checks at the Manchester school are not as meticulously maintained as in the other schools.
- 4.3 Staff and students benefit from well-maintained, appropriately decorated, and clean premises that provide a comfortable environment for learning and work. Classrooms and other student areas are suitably furnished and equipped to a high standard. The washrooms are clean and sufficient for the current number of students. Free drinking water is available. Food is hygienically prepared and served in clean facilities. The lighting, heating, sound insulation and ventilation are all fit for purpose.
- 4.4 There is adequate access to the premises for those who have SEND at the Oxford and Cambridge schools. Due to the age of the buildings, the London and Manchester schools are not fully suitable for students who have restricted mobility. Students receive clear guidance on the accessibility of each school.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.5 Student registration systems are excellent. Managers maintain a highly accurate admission register, supported by robust student enrolment procedures. Student information is systematically recorded, with meticulous checks on identification, previous academic experience and, where appropriate, visa status.
- 4.6 Attendance is good. Each school maintains highly accurate attendance registers. Staff are aware of students' whereabouts and take prompt action to follow up on any absences, especially for students aged under 18. A small minority of students have attendance which does not meet EF's minimum expectations. Overall, student attendance rates at the time of inspection were 88 per cent. The average attendance of students studying on Student Visas at the time of inspection was 90 per cent.
- 4.7 Relevant staff have a clear understanding of Home Office requirements for enrolment and attendance for those students on Student Visas. Leaders make the necessary

reports when a student fails to enrol or otherwise discontinues study or does not fulfil Home Office requirements for attendance. Clear policies and procedures are in place for collecting and refunding student fees and deposits. Students are clear about the procedures for refunding fees and deposits and feel they are fair.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.8 Pastoral support is excellent. Students benefit from clear, comprehensive and well-planned induction arrangements which help them settle into student life quickly. Students' academic progress is closely monitored through online systems, frequent assessments, and the tutorial system. Appropriate academic and welfare support interventions are put in place swiftly where needed, including a supportive mentoring system for longer-term students. This ensures that almost all students complete their course, make excellent progress and achieve.
- 4.9 There is an excellent relationship between teachers, support staff and students. Most students spoken to by inspectors speak very highly of their school experience and of the kindness of staff. Students enjoy their studies and feel well supported. Any issues are addressed quickly and efficiently, ensuring students have a positive school experience. Each school promotes integration, mutual respect and tolerance well and has effective procedures to help prevent bullying and harassment. Managers have implemented effective policies and procedures to help protect students from the risks of radicalisation and extremist ideologies.
- 4.10 Students benefit from a varied, comprehensive and well-planned programme of events, excursions and social activities that are very well matched to their needs, interests and budgets. Students receive effective advice, guidance and practical support to ensure they are well prepared to progress to their next steps, including higher education courses.

4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s

- 4.11 Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Leaders have implemented robust safeguarding policies and procedures that support a culture where students' safety is prioritised. Comprehensive safeguarding procedures reflect national guidance. The monitoring arrangements for safeguarding students aged under 18 are well understood and systematically implemented.
- 4.12 Staff at all levels receive appropriate and effective safeguarding training that ensures they understand their roles and responsibilities. Efficient online systems and systematic monitoring arrangements ensure that safeguarding concerns are clearly recorded and swiftly addressed. Leaders have implemented clear and robust safer recruitment processes. All staff with access to students under 18 are subject to an appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) suitability check before or on appointment.
- 4.13 Students report feeling safe and welcome at all schools. They know how to access support when needed, including at weekends and in the evenings.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.14 Residential accommodation arrangements are good. School directors ensure that homestay residences are managed and registered in accordance with national requirements. Appropriate safety checks are undertaken and systemically recorded to ensure student residences and homestay providers are appropriately monitored for safety, security and cleanliness. Leaders and managers ensure that relevant DBS checks are completed for homestay families where required.
- 4.15 Students accommodated in residences and with homestay providers access the comprehensive social programme of events and activities at each school. Students in residential accommodation can access appropriate pastoral and welfare support when required. Managers have adequate arrangements in place to monitor students' experience in their accommodation. Managers take prompt, appropriate action when required in response to student feedback.
- 4.16 Most students are satisfied with the quality of their accommodation. A few homestay providers and students feel that communication with the schools could be improved. Leaders and managers have recently launched new systems to improve the quality and timeliness of homestay information to students and providers. However, the new systems are not fully implemented with all homestay providers.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Governance and oversight are excellent. Senior leaders set a clear, consistent educational direction, ensuring that students at each school benefit from a high standard of education and care.
- 5.2 Senior leaders have excellent insight into each school's performance. They discharge their responsibilities for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety very effectively to school directors, with systematic oversight mechanisms provided by the central operations team.
- 5.3 Senior leaders have robust and effective oversight and reporting mechanisms for overseeing financial management and for ensuring each school meets their statutory duties and legislative requirements. There are very effective working relationships between senior leaders, the operations team and school directors.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.4 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. Senior leaders have established a very clear and effective management structure which meets the needs of the organisation and each school. School directors select, recruit and train staff with the relevant qualifications and experience to carry out their roles to a high standard.
- 5.5 Senior leaders ensure that staff in each school understand and effectively implement the policies, procedures and resources they need to meet students' needs. There are clear, systematic processes in place to ensure EF policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, updated, and contextualised to meet the needs of each of the four schools.
- 5.6 Academic managers have rigorous processes in place to ensure students benefit from a high standard of teaching. Managers conduct regular observations of teaching, providing teachers with detailed, constructive feedback to help them continuously improve. An appropriate staff appraisal system effectively reviews performance, highlights good practice and identifies relevant training opportunities where needed. Academic staff benefit from a very clear progression pathway, supported by appropriate training, mentoring, and development opportunities. This supports their ongoing career development with EF well.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.7 Quality assurance arrangements are good. Senior leaders' self-evaluation identifies relevant strengths and areas for improvement. School development plans identify appropriate areas for further improvement.
- 5.8 Leaders collect and analyse performance data to assess and monitor students' progress over time. Leaders have recently identified how they can better use

attainment data at each school to improve students' achievement rates further. However, it is too soon to measure the full impact of these measures.

- 5.9 Managers systematically collect and analyse student feedback, taking swift and appropriate action to address areas for improvement. This helps to ensure students receive a high standard of education and care.
- 5.10 Schools have a clear and transparent complaints procedure in place. Any complaints are taken seriously and responded to fully. Appropriate mechanisms are in place to make arrangements for the independent adjudication of unresolved complaints.

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

- 5.11 Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are excellent. Leaders and managers consistently implement robust processes to ensure that all required staff suitability checks are carried out, including identification and right-to-work checks.
- 5.12 School directors systematically maintain very well-organised staff files. Appropriate references are taken up and verified. A clear, accurate, single central record of completed checks is maintained.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.13 The provision of information is excellent. School websites provide comprehensive, accurate, and detailed information about each school, which is very helpful to students, prospective students, and parents.
- 5.14 The schools provided all the information required by inspectors, which was very well organised and accessible.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Support all teachers to use digital learning resources more consistently.
- Ensure health and safety record-keeping at the Manchester school is meticulously maintained, as in the other schools.
- Make the best use of attainment data to identify further ways to improve attainment rates.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and staff and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior leaders, school directors and other senior staff. Inspectors attended registration sessions. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Steve Ingle	Lead Inspector
Ms Margaret Arokiasamy	Team Inspector
Ms Jane Beeson	Team Inspector
Mr Simon Bellamy	Team Inspector
Ms Elizabeth Greenhalgh	Team Inspector
Dr David Gutmann	Team Inspector
Mr Saul Hyman	Team Inspector
Mr Patrick Lawlor	Team Inspector
Ms Eileen O-Gara	Team Inspector