



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

MAYFLOWER COLLEGE

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Centre Manager	Miss Jill Tyler
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Age Range	13+
Total number of students	86
Numbers by age and type of study	Under 18: 24 18+: 62 EFL only: 86
Inspection dates	17 to 19 June 2014

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 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.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Mayflower College is a provider of English language courses, situated in a residential area close to the waterfront south of Plymouth city centre. It aims to provide high quality, cost effective English Language teaching and testing programmes to international students and professionals. It is a Private Limited Company, founded in 1988 by the current owner and managing director. In 2010, the owner took up residence in the USA, but maintains strategic oversight of the college. Since then, the college has been under the day-to-day management of the general manager for all non-academic aspects, and the director of studies for all academic and teaching matters.
- 1.2 The college offers courses in general English at different levels, preparation for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination, teacher training and junior activity courses during the summer months. Students can also prepare for Cambridge ESOL examinations. The college is a centre for aviation English courses for pilots and air traffic controllers and has developed and operates the international Test for Aviation English (TEA). It is also an IELTS test centre. There was limited aviation English provision in progress during the inspection.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 86 students enrolled, approximately one third of them female. The large majority of students come from European countries, mainly France and Germany, and the others are from a wide range of other countries, including Saudi Arabia, Libya and Turkey. The large majority of students are adults, but during the summer months the college also provides courses for young learners aged 13-17 years. There are no students identified as having special needs or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 Students complete an online assessment before arrival, and are placed into classes on the first day. Class levels are matched to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and vary in size between a maximum 10 students per class for adults and 15 per class for juniors. One-to-one tuition is also available. The majority of students study between 15 and 25 hours per week. The college provides weekly continuous enrolment for General English courses throughout the year and most students stay between 1 and 6 weeks. An increasing number of long-term students stay between 3 months and a year.
- 1.5 Almost all students choose to live with home stay families, with the remainder choosing local hotel or guest house accommodation. Residential accommodation provided by the University of Plymouth is also possible, subject to availability.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college meets expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Key Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is good.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is good. A variety of courses is offered for both general and specialist English, and levels are linked to the CEFR. Courses on offer to Tier 4 visa students lead to qualifications or outcomes which meet Home Office requirements. Pre-arrival testing ensures students are placed into class at the appropriate language level. Teaching is of a high standard, well-planned to effectively meet students' needs, and enables good learning and progress. Knowledgeable teachers make use of a variety of activities in class to engage and motivate students. Ongoing assessment of students by means of homework and regular testing effectively supports and monitors achievement. Tutorials to enhance progress are held regularly for long-term students, but offer limited advice on self-study, consequently missing opportunities to reinforce learning.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. The college premises are secure, comfortable and well-maintained. Comprehensive risk assessments for the premises and for off-site activities have been carried out and their recommendations rigorously implemented. Fire safety and first aid are good, and conform to legal requirements, although the frequency of fire drills and number of fire marshals are the minimum recommended. A minority of minor fire risk recommendations have not been addressed. Pastoral care for students is excellent. The college offers a high level of support and rigorous arrangements to safeguard students aged under 18. Homestay families are carefully chosen and provide students with further opportunities to practise their English. Families providing long-term accommodation for students under 16 are checked for suitability through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). A good social activities programme enriches students' cultural experience of Britain. The college maintains accurate admissions and attendance records. Good procedures are in place for monitoring student attendance and for reporting to the Home Office
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is good. The leadership of the college provides clear educational direction and effectively fulfils its aims. Students are well educated and well cared for. Communication is good at all levels. The college appoints appropriately qualified staff and actively supports their professional development. Staff work well together to ensure student welfare and academic progress. Detailed and realistic self-evaluation has recently been implemented, and is beginning to drive improvement. Rigorous monitoring of teaching linked to teacher appraisals does not always take place and is not related to the provision of staff training, thereby limiting development. Student feedback is collected, and valued by the college. Academic progress data is gathered, but not yet analysed sufficiently to drive improvement. Staff recruitment procedures are well-managed and meet requirements. 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 Assessment of students prior to or on arrival is good. The majority of students take the online test provided by the college before arrival. Further informal oral assessment during the induction is used to confirm the on-line test results. Thorough initial monitoring ensures that a student is in the correct class. Where necessary, there is also flexibility to change class, although this is rare. The assessment system very effectively ensures that all students are correctly placed for optimum progress.
- 3.2 Currently there are no students with SEND. However, the college has policies in place to ensure that suitable arrangements can be made for such students in order to support their studies

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.3 Course provision and the curriculum are good and very effectively meet student needs. The college offers a range of courses which are accurately described on the college website. Detailed curriculum statements are available in the staff handbook. Meticulous planning of courses by senior teachers also takes continuous enrolment on general English courses into account and provides valuable flexibility for individual teachers. Teachers follow well-designed weekly plans with the help of the excellent teacher database. Consequently, lessons are appropriate and meet students' needs, ages and aptitudes. Students report they are progressing well and achieving their goals.
- 3.4 Courses are rigorously matched to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and students take weekly tests to assess their progress. Morning lessons are well-planned, providing students with essential grammar and speaking skills. Afternoon lessons respond effectively to student demand for specific language skills or special subjects, such as teacher training and examination preparation. The college has developed a successful range of professional courses and tests in Aviation English, meeting the needs of an international market. The college also offers valuable extra tuition by organising free lessons held weekly after class. Student feedback is taken into account when planning these events.
- 3.5 Attendance rates are very high, and most students complete the course they enrolled for. The college works hard at building good relationships with clients and meeting their needs. Group leaders present during the inspection spoke highly of the college in every respect.

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

- 3.6 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is good. Most lessons are either good or excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable and lessons are generally well

planned, relevant and interesting. The excellent networked resources system allows all teachers to access a comprehensive range of audio and visual materials for use in class. As a result, lessons successfully stimulate and challenge students. Class management is good although in some lessons more vocal students are allowed to dominate, thereby limiting opportunities for others. In the best lessons, teachers use excellent correction and elicitation techniques. In a few less successful lessons, opportunities for correcting pronunciation and grammar are missed, consequently limiting improvement.

- 3.7 Students are strongly motivated, work well together and clearly demonstrate enjoyment and learning. Teachers are sensitive to student needs and encourage progress and self-confidence. Homework is regularly set and corrected, and teachers use a very effective marking system to correct written work and provide helpful, supportive comments.
- 3.8 The college maintains a clear focus on individual progress and achievement. Students report they are happy with their lessons and the support they receive. A well-planned system of tutorials is in place for long-term students, who are provided with a personal tutor and regular tutorials. These cover both academic and welfare topics, enabling comprehensive support for students, although limited setting of specific targets for self-study restricts progress. Weekly tests are used effectively to assess learning and help determine when to move students up to the next level.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.9 Student attainment and progress is good and students report they are making good headway towards their goals. Data for individual student progress, based on entry and exit levels and length of course, demonstrate good progression for most students studying for more than one week. .
- 3.10 Exam results are good. Where records of IELTS examination passes are available, results are of a good level and in line with predictions based on students' CEFR levels whilst at the college. The large majority of students taking the Test for Aviation English (TEA) achieved the minimum grade required or higher.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

- 4.1 Provision for welfare, health and safety is good and the college provides a comfortable, safe learning environment. Comprehensive general risk assessments have been completed and their recommendations implemented, which effectively ensure student safety both on and off premises. The college complies with all statutory regulations for fire safety: fire signage is correctly located throughout the college, fire exits are clearly marked and staff assigned to help in the safe evacuation of the building in an emergency. There are insufficient trained fire marshals. Fire drills are held twice yearly. However, the vast majority of students only attend for short periods, particularly during the busy summer months, when no drill is held. Consequently, most students have no experience of fire drills. A specialist company is responsible for regular checks and maintenance of fire equipment and has also carried out a comprehensive fire risk assessment. Urgent recommendations for improvement have been actioned, but a small number of minor recommendations remain outstanding.
- 4.2 First aid provision is well-organised. Sufficient members of staff are trained first aiders and well-maintained first aid boxes are available at strategic points around the building. Clearly visible first aid information notices are placed in every classroom and public area. Accidents are meticulously noted in the accident log book.
- 4.3 The college buildings are well-maintained with satisfactory decoration. Classrooms are clean and tidy, well ventilated and furnished appropriately. Sound insulation is good. The college has an adequate number of washrooms and good areas for relaxation: students benefit from a well-managed canteen and leisure area, where hot drinks and snacks are served. Students report that they feel safe and secure at the college and inspectors consider security of the premises to be satisfactory. There is no disabled access or facilities.
- 4.4 Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out for off-site activities, and the college takes special care to protect younger students.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.5 Registration and attendance records are good. Admissions and attendance registers are accurately maintained via the college database. Admissions procedures are carefully followed, and detailed records are kept at each stage. The college policy on collection and refund of fees is fair and clearly laid out on the college website.
- 4.6 Student attendance is meticulously monitored, with any unauthorised absence promptly followed up. The college has a rigorous lateness and absence policy, which is consistently implemented. As a result, student attendance is excellent.

- 4.7 The college has previously sponsored Tier 4 visa students, and staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to monitoring student absence and procedures for reporting to the Home Office.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.8 Excellent pastoral support and guidance is provided for all students at the college. Students are given a helpful induction, as well as an excellent handbook containing comprehensive advice about living and studying in Britain. This enables them to settle quickly into their course. Designated staff are available to help with welfare or accommodation problems, and students are also able to approach their teachers and personal tutors with any issues. Inspectors found that interaction between staff and students and between students themselves is positive. The college has clear policies in place to prevent bullying and foster tolerance and integration among all students, and the friendly atmosphere in the college supports this.
- 4.9 The college provides a good social activities programme to enhance students' stay in Britain. There are free weekend excursions to places of interest and also regular social meetings.
- 4.10 Well-explained careers advice is available on the college website, with links to local providers of further and higher education and the UK Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The college maintains well-established links with local providers, and the tutorial system offers valuable opportunities for students to discuss the options open to them after leaving the college.

4.(d) Child protection/safeguarding

- 4.11 The college has excellent policies and procedures in place for safeguarding students aged under 18, with a designated member of staff responsible for their welfare. Very good provision for student welfare and safety exists in college and in homestay accommodation, as well as during off-site activities. Management ensures that procedures are fully understood and rigorously followed by all concerned.
- 4.12 All staff receive comprehensive training in safeguarding and are aware of its importance. They have all undergone DBS checks.
- 4.13 At enrolment, parents and guardians are made aware of the college policies on safeguarding, and are required to sign a consent form to confirm their acceptance of these rules. There is also excellent communication between the college and student agents or group leaders to promote safety.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.14 Arrangements for homestay accommodation are excellent. Management of homestay by the college accommodation officer is highly effective and there are excellent relationships between the college and host families. Hosts are provided with comprehensive information, guidance and support; as a result they are well

aware of their responsibilities. They are welcoming and caring and provide students with valuable opportunities to practise their language skills while learning about home life in the UK.

- 4.15 The vast majority of students report high satisfaction with their homestay accommodation. Inspection findings show that the college takes care to place students with the most suitable host families for their needs. Any complaints that may arise about homestay are immediately investigated, and, where necessary, the student is moved to another more suitable family.
- 4.16 The college complies with all statutory regulations regarding the accommodation of minors and juniors. Any families hosting juniors for more than 28 days are checked with the Disclosure and Barring Service as required by law and the college liaises closely with the city council with regard to these procedures.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight of the college is good. The leadership of the college provides clear educational direction. As a result, the education provided is of a high quality. Student needs, both academic and pastoral, are effectively met, and the college amply fulfils its aims.
- 5.2 Although the proprietor is resident abroad, he is in daily communication with senior management. Consequently, he has full oversight of the procedures and operation of the college. He maintains overall responsibility for final decisions, but delegates very effectively to senior management, who ensure that college policies and procedures are up-to-date, effective and well-implemented.
- 5.3 The proprietor takes legal and financial advice from professionals in the UK to keep informed of any relevant changes in statutory procedures. As a result, the college complies fully with its statutory duties and has appropriate legal permissions from all relevant bodies.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.4 Management structures are good. Managers and senior staff are committed to providing students with high-quality education and pastoral care. Management is successful in providing clear direction to all staff, and college policies are implemented well. Communication is mostly informal but effective, and relationships between managers and staff are good.
- 5.5 The college has no formal development plan, but focuses all staff on the college mission statement, which includes an extremely comprehensive overview of objectives for each department and procedures to achieve them. As a result, staff are motivated, and clear about priorities and their role in achieving them. Regular weekly meetings between the proprietor and senior management also look at short- and long-term priorities and targets for the future, and review the outcomes of previous targets to effectively drive improvement.
- 5.6 The college is successful in securing and motivating high quality staff in all departments and staff report high job satisfaction. There is an excellent induction and handover procedure in place for new office staff. All staff receive good quality training appropriate to their roles. Staff responsible for student welfare have completed safeguarding training at an appropriate level with a public provider, and teachers benefit from regular ongoing in-house workshops and meetings for professional development. Attendance at external conferences and workshops is also provided. In addition, the college offers financial support and encouragement to staff who wish to obtain further qualifications in teaching or management.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.7 The college has good systems for quality assurance. These include the collection of weekly student feedback and leaving questionnaires. Action to resolve any problems is undertaken promptly and documented for future reference. Student feedback results are circulated to all staff in monthly progress reports and effective responses to issues raised are subsequently discussed at staff meetings. Data on student progress is also collated from weekly progress tests and external examinations, but this is not systematically analysed and used to better monitor teaching and student progress.
- 5.8 The quality of staff appraisals is inconsistent. A minority are well-managed and include a mid-year review of progress against targets. However, others are less frequent and underdeveloped. Appraisal of teachers is not linked to classroom observations and there is no formal interim review of progress against targets. Continuing professional development is not related to appraisal outcomes. Classroom observations are not carried out at regular intervals and there is no provision for follow-up evaluation and further support where necessary. As a result their impact on teaching and learning is limited.
- 5.9 The college has an appropriate, clear complaints policy published on the website, with provision for adjudication by an external party if a complaint cannot be resolved.
- 5.10 Student interviews with inspectors together with pre-inspection questionnaire responses were overwhelmingly positive. A minority of students feel they are not well-informed of their progress, but the majority are happy with their teachers and lessons, as well as with the support and help the college provides. The majority of students would also recommend the college. The inspection findings support these views.
- 5.11 The college provides a fee protection scheme.

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

- 5.12 Staff recruitment procedures are good. All staff are interviewed before appointment. Thorough checks are carried out on their background, qualifications and suitability for the post. References from previous employers are taken up and their identity and right to work in the UK is confirmed. All staff have undergone DBS checks.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.13 The provision of information is excellent. The college website displays comprehensive details on the college, its policies and its provision. All information is written in an easily accessible style to enable comprehension by all students.

The college provided all information requested by inspectors.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Improve student tutorials by setting specific targets for self-study with subsequent checks on their achievement.
- Increase the frequency of lesson observations, link these firmly to teacher appraisals and ensure that progress on targets from both are reviewed in a timely manner.
- Improve the level of fire safety by holding more frequent fire drills, appointing sufficient fire marshals and ensuring that all fire risk assessment recommendations are implemented.
- Develop a system for analysis of student achievement data in order to better monitor student progress and improve provision.

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 and visited homestay accommodation. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Ms. Liz Brynin	Lead Inspector
Ms Janet King	Team Inspector