

Institution: Bloomsbury International

Inspectors:

Martyn Ellis (reporting)

Sue Hackett

Dates: 14th and 15th December 2017



Section One: Inspection Verdict

Verdict statement:

Accredited membership of the institution can be reconfirmed, as all standards of the Equals Charters are fully met.

Grades

Grade 2 = meets the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters

Grade 2,5 = does not meet the Standards required by the Equals Charters with reference to one or more relatively minor indicators of compliance, which can easily and swiftly be rectified, and evidence, such as a document or photo, can be readily submitted

Grade 3 = does not meet the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters

Grade 1 = exceeds the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters and identifies a Category of consistent excellence in the institution

Grade 1,5 = meets the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters and identifies a Category which, in some respects, exceeds Equals high Standards, exhibiting one or two indicators of excellence, while not achieving consistent excellence in this Category

CATEGORIES		Grade	CATEGORIES (CON'T)		Grade
1	Management and Administration	2	7	Client Services	1.5
2	Teaching and Learning	1.5	8	Quality assurance	2
3	Course Design and Supporting Systems	2	9	Staff Profile and Development	2
4	Assessment and Certification	2	10	Staff Employment Terms	2
5	Academic Resources	2	11	Internal Communications	2.5
6	Learning Environment	1.5	12	External Communications	1.5
TOTAL GRADE:					22.5

Executive Summary

As an independent language centre, Bloomsbury International continues to provide a high quality language learning environment within a highly competitive local market. It has assembled a team of hardworking and mutually supportive managers, administrators and teachers to attract language learners to the centre, provide a high level of client services during their stay and to provide an effective product at the point of delivery through its harmonious and hard-working teaching staff. Within this successful structure, there are areas which would benefit from further improvement, some of which should be addressed on the appointment of a new Director of Studies, which the centre currently lacks. The overall impression given was of a centre receptive to advice, recommendations and suggestions both from its own staff and from outside agencies, such as Equals, in order to further fulfill its aims and objectives.

Inspectors appreciate that a considerable amount of time has elapsed since the centre submitted its organisational structure chart, its staff details, its detailed job descriptions and details of modifications to its premises, but would urge that this information is kept up



to date throughout the stages of application and inspection. Some of these inaccuracies are referred to within the report.

The Inspectors would like to thank the management and staff for the excellent level of preparation before the inspection and for the cooperation of all colleagues during the inspection.



Section Two: Account of the Inspection

Timetable

Day One (Thursday 14 December 2017)

Time	Action	Staff involved	Inspectors
08.30-09.00	Initial tour of premises. Meet staff Explain procedures	Inspection coordinator (Centre manager)	ME, SH
09.00-09.30	Meeting with the Owner	Owner-manager	ME, SH
09.30-10.30	Meeting with Centre Manager	Centre manager	ME, SH
10.30-10.50	Student focus group	Representative group of students	SH
10.30-11.00	Inspect premises: evacuation procedures, health and safety, etc.	Health and Safety Officer (accounts)	ME
11.00-11.45	Initial class observation - both Inspectors x 1 class	Teaching staff	ME, SH
11.45-12.15	Class observation x 4	Teaching staff	ME, SH
12.20-12.50	Teacher focus group	Representative group of teachers	ME, SH
12.50-13.50	Lunch		
13.50-14.30	Class observation x 2	Teaching staff	ME
13.50-14.30	Inspect teaching and learning resources	None	SH
14.30-15.30	Meeting with Senior Teacher (academic)	Senior Teacher	SH, (ME)
15.00-15.30	Meeting with registrars (+ organise accommodation visits for Monday 18th)	Registrars	ME
15.30-16.30	Follow-up meeting with Centre Manager (academic)	Centre manager	ME, SH
1630-17.00	Loose ends	None	ME, SH
17.00-1800	Inspectors meet	None	ME / SH



Day Two (Friday 15 December 2017)

Time	Action	Staff or participants	Inspectors
09.00-09.30	Meeting with HR and general admin manager	HR manager	ME, SH
09.30-10.20	Meeting re sales and marketing	Sales and marketing managers	ME, SH
10.30-11.30	Inspect academic documentation, materials and procedures	Acting academic manager when necessary (Centre Manager)	ME, SH
11.30-12.15	Class observation + attendance at graduation ceremony	Teaching staff	SH
11.30-12.15	Inspection checklist in preparation for feedback	None	ME
12.20-12.50	Meeting with Academic Support Officer	Academic support officer	ME
12.20-12.50	Inspect physical and electronic academic resources.	None	SH
12.50-13.50	Lunch		
14.00-14.20	Class observation x 1	Teaching staff	SH
14.20-15.00	Inspectors meeting: loose ends, conclusions	None	ME, SH
15.00-15.30	Inspect legal, financial and contractual documentation	Centre manager (if necessary)	ME, SH
15.30-17.00	Preparation of feedback	None	ME, (SH)
17.00-18.15	Feedback to management team	Bloomsbury management team: Owner, Centre manager, marketing manager, finance manager	ME, SH
18.15	End of inspection		

Day Three: (Monday 18th December 2017)

ME inspected homestay residences accompanied by a member of staff.



Staffing of the Language Education Centre

At the time of the inspection the centre was staffed by the Owner/general manager, a Centre Manager, who was assisting the Academic Support in covering the role of Director of Studies whilst the centre seeks to recruit, a Senior Teacher, an Academic Support Officer, and ten teachers listed on the company organogram, two of whom were part time and not available during the visit, and one of whom carries out academic duties in her role as Senior Teacher, also partly covering the duties of the Director of Studies alongside the Centre Manager. Additionally, there were two sales executives in charge of marketing and working alongside a sales support staff member, as well as an accounts team of three, one of whom was also responsible for health and safety within the centre, and a Human Resources manager. The front desk is staffed by two registrars under the direction of the Centre Manager.

The organisational diagram also shows a web Director who was not available during the inspection and also a senior design executive.

The Centre Manager, who was assisting the Academic Support in covering the role of Director of Studies, has 12 years of ELT experience in both academic and administrative roles, having joined Bloomsbury International as student services manager before being appointed to her current role. Her considerable experience as academic manager of a number of previous centres has enabled her to carry out an academic role alongside that of Centre Manager while the centre seeks to recruit a replacement for the Director of Studies who departed in August. The centre's management is in the form of a largely flat structure, under the overall direction of the Owner/Director, who spends around 70% of her time in the centre's main office, with the Centre Manager, Director of Studies, Accounts Manager and sales executives all accountable to her but on the same responsibility level as each other.

There were 11 teachers on the staff at the time of the inspection. 9 were observed, one was doing a one-to-one course which Inspectors did not observe and one an evening course which was not observed either. They were all on zero-hour contracts, four were full time, the remainder part time. Some divided their time between working in this centre and another at other times of the day.

Inspectors acknowledge that, as this inspection had been postponed from its initial proposed dates in August and then in October, the application form and related documentation had been submitted in June. By the time of the inspection in December, there had been a number of changes in personnel and structure, with the result that the organisational chart and teaching staff list were no longer current. It is important that, in these circumstances, information in submitted documentation should be as current as possible, even if it is in the form of an amendment, for example to indicate the organisational structure in the absence of a Director of Studies. See also comments and recommendations in Section of the main report.



Description of the Institution; provided by the Language Education Centre.

Section E: Language Education Centre Background Information

History

The institution (legal status, ownership)

Bloomsbury International UK is a limited company, owned by the Managing Directors. The school is part of the Gendai Group, also owned by the Managing Directors, which has interests in travel, publishing, and education. Two of these businesses, Gendai Travel Ltd and Eikoku News Digest Ltd, operate from the same premises as the school. Bloomsbury International was founded in 2004, with the aim of drawing on this experience to provide high quality English language education and services.

The institution is accredited by the British Council and is a member of English UK.

Premises

The school occupies two multi-storey terraced town houses. While the properties have been renovated, they retain many of their original Georgian features which gives elegance and style to the school environment. Many classrooms feature original fire places, sash windows, chandeliers and ornate mirrors.

Facilities

The Student resource Centre occupancy 25, has a soft furnished area equipped with newspapers and magazines and several study tables with access to dictionaries and free resource material from A1 to C2, TOEFL, IELTS and much more. The Bloomsbury Cafe occupancy 24, students relax with classmates over freshly prepared food and drink. Live broadcasts and music is shown on the widescreen TV. The Bloomsbury Spill occupancy 21, students meet here to relax, eat, drink or just have a chat. This room is also used for English Cream Tea Parties and similar events. Olympic Lounge & Patio-occupancy 30, this area plays host to pool practice, pool tournaments as well as a general chill out area with open access to a small patio with seating for 10. All areas are open from 0830 – 1800 Mon Fri (Bloomsbury Cafe serving times: 0840 - 1600) There are also vending machines in the main school and a Tuck shop in the Junior school. Each building has its own wide staircase, toilet facilities and fire exits.

Classroom equipment

There are 16 classrooms in total. 9 are equipped with interactive whiteboards connected to computers. 10 are equipped with whiteboards (this includes 4 classrooms used for 1-to-1 lessons or small classes of 4-6 students, with the remaining 6 classrooms being full size classrooms).



Section F: Courses Offered

	Approximate percentage of total student hours as calculated below	Approximate number of teachers per language taught
Language 1 (insert name) add further rows as needed	100%	10

Types of course, e.g. national and international exam courses, .and on-line courses over the year (add rows as needed)		
Exam Preparation	IELTS	17.18%
Exam Preparation	TOEFL & TOEIC	2.05%
Exam Preparation	FCE	0.95%
Exam Preparation	CAE	1.99%
Exam Preparation	CPE	0.03%
Business English	Business English	5.13%
Communication Skills	AM & PM Elective	0.42%
English Plus	English plus Football/Work Experience	0.87%
English plus	General English plus Business English	3.34%
English	Standard Young Learner	6.12%
English	One to one	0.76%
English	two to One	0.16%
English	Closed group	0.10%
General English	Standard, Standard Plus, Intensive, Intensive, Super Intensive	60.44%

Any courses provided which are not language courses (e.g. teacher training).

Name of course	Type	Student Numbers
Teacher Training	Teacher Refresher Course	0.46%

Online learning support services

Online learning support services Are your face-to-face courses supported by digital and online tools in any of the following areas: • Homework: Yes? / No? • Assessment: Yes? / No? • In class: Yes? / No? If your answer to any of the above is 'Yes', please give brief further details:		Compulsory or optional element of the course?	Fully integrated into the course, or separate?
	• Homework:		Fully integrated. A designated platform of resources is available from our website for both homework set in the classroom and independent learning. Additionally, digital course resource material is used in class and for homework.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment: • In class: 	<p>An initial online diagnostic assessment is a compulsory part of the course. Digital resources are also used throughout the course in order to gauge progress.</p> <p>Compulsory</p>	<p>Fully integrated</p> <p>Fully integrated. Each course sees elements of blended learning throughout.</p>	
<p>Blended Learning: course content Are any of the enrolled hours for any course(s) required to be completed online (either as asynchronous online learning or through synchronous interaction with a teacher online via a webinar or similar tool)?</p>	<p>If 'yes', please give details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of student hours: - no. of teachers 	Asynchronous	Synchronous	
<p>Blended Learning: timing Please give details of e-learning likely to be taking place during the inspection period, including where possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no. of levels / courses - no. of hours, if synchronous <p>Please give details of Blended Learning courses or part-courses taking place outside the inspection period:</p> <p>While we do not have online courses, blended learning is an element of each course and as such could be present in any class being taught during an inspection period.</p>	<p>Synchronous (teachers and students online together):</p>	<p>Asynchronous (Material available for students to use at their convenience):</p>		



Section G: Student Numbers

Students				
Approximate total of number of all student hours of tuition provided by the Language Education Centre during the last 12 months . Include course participants taught in-company and in other off-site locations		To calculate student hours: multiply the number of course participants registered, by the number of 60-minutes clock hours each received (for example, 30 course participants doing a course lasting 60 clock hours is 1,800 student hours) Total Number: 107241		
Low and Peak Seasons (Please tell us which are your busiest and quietest months)		Low Season (months): October to February	Peak season (months): April to September	
Numbers of sites		Please list all sites you use in low and peak season and state approximate travel time from main premises		
Low Season: 1		Peak season: 1		
Approximate total of number of students at different times of the year	Q1 Jan-March: 270	Q2 April-Jun: 300	Q3 July-Sept: 630	Q4 Oct-Dec: 250
Approximate numbers of full time (15 or more hours per week) and part-time (under 15 hours per week) course participants age 16 – 17 .		Full-time	Part time	
	Number:	1450		
	Percentage:	100%	%	
Maximum size of classes taught:				
Approximate numbers of full time (15 or more hours per week) and part-time (under 15 hours per week) course participants age 18+ over the year		Full-time	Part time	
	Number:			
	Percentage:	%	%	
Maximum size of classes taught:				
Approximate Numbers of Junior (11-15) Young Learners (6-10) and Very Young Learners (6 and under) over the year		Junior (16-11)	Young Learners (6-10)	Very Young Learners (6 and under)
	Number:	295	15	0
	Percentage:	20%	1%	%
Maximum size of classes taught:				
Staffing				
Number of Full Time Teaching Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	8	10	13	8
Number of Part Time Teaching Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	1	1	2	3
Number of Full Time Administrative Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	4	4	4	4
Number of Part Time Administrative Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	1	1	1	0



Section H: Developments since your last Inspection

Actions taken	Based on Eaqals recommendations?
The school witnessed the departure of its ADoS and Dos this summer and is yet to recruit replacements for these posts. It has, however, recently promoted 2 teachers to Senior teachers with more responsibilities. Additionally, the recruitment of Student Services Manager at the beginning of the year, who has several years' experience in academic management, has meant that the senior teachers and teaching staff have been fully supported in their posts.	
The school's self assessment of 2015 identified a need to provide further assistance and guidance to students wishing to enter university. Significant measures have since been put in place in order to ensure students have the necessary information and assistance from an experienced staff member. This service is freely available to all students.	
Student achievement data is regularly analysed in order to inform future planning.	
CPD's on blended learning and utilizing the IWB to its full potential have been conducted throughout the year: March, May, September, November and December this year.	
Eaquals recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clearer links between the curriculum statement, school syllabus and materials to be used have been made. The syllabus is referred to and contributes more actively to the development of weekly schemes of work.• A more formalized procedure for level change and exit level along with the materials for testing have been implemented• Clarification of the aims of different types of teaching staff observations has been implemented	



Section Three: Grading

1. Management and Administration (Eaquals General Charter: 1, 2, 3, 4)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

1.1 There is an institutional ethos which provides the foundation for the institution's activities.

1.2 The leadership and organisational structure of the Language Education Centre support this mission and the achievement of its objectives.

The centre management has submitted a statutory declaration stating its compliance with all relevant national and local legislation and all pertaining to company law for its function as a language centre.

There is a declared mission statement in the detailed syllabus documentation which states the centre's commitment to be as follows:

'(to provide) the best possible learning experience for all our students and teacher trainees in a friendly, safe and comfortable environment, where they are motivated to achieve their learning goals to the best of their ability. We further endeavour to employ qualified, motivated and caring staff and provide them with varied opportunities for professional development.'

Within this mission statement there is also a further statement relating to the centre's undertaking:

'(to) deliver a service of excellence supported by a tradition of integrity and honesty to all our clients and customers and to create a learning environment of excellence where our international students are motivated to achieve their learning goals to the best of their ability.'

There then follows an 11-point breakdown of detailed commitments in the areas of learning environment, integrity and honesty, use of technology, student needs, accommodation provision, quality staff, pastoral care, and continuing development. The centre's policy of providing students with monitoring of individual student progress through weekly assessment and regular tutorial sessions also feature.

There is a general statement on the centre's website alluding to these detailed assurances which assures students that they will improve their English quickly, reach their learning goals and enjoy their time in London through the provision of a personal study plan and individual attention and support throughout their course to ensure rapid progress and realistic learning objectives.

Finally, the informative student handbook carries an initial statement relating to methodology within the centre which includes the following:

'We want you express yourself successfully and confidently in English. In your lessons, you will have exposure to practical and meaningful uses of the English language, with activities and material adapted to individual needs. Our teachers use the communicative and topic-based approach with an emphasis on speaking and listening skills. We supplement our lessons with authentic materials and elements of Web 2.0, in order to meet your learning aims, and so that progress can continue outside of the classroom.'

The content of the above-mentioned declarations is consistently acted upon in a practical manner through the centre's focus on effective course design and delivery at all points of service, including the classroom and related customer services, although Inspectors urge the management team to make some key decisions in terms of its strategic management plan, most specifically that of the role and appointment of an academic manager, the post of which has been vacant since August. At the same time, the job descriptions of all posts need to be reviewed, and key roles and responsibilities added, as described in Section 11. The centre is fully aware of the fragility and vulnerability of the global market in this type of activity and has appointed a skilled team of marketing and Sales Managers to plan and organise its future activities, using the full potential of information technology to maximise its coverage of existing and emerging markets. Of particular note was the approach to data analytics which was impressive in tracking and identifying markets and trends, managed with enthusiasm and commitment by the Sales and Marketing Manager and his colleagues. The team is also currently working on further enhancement of its informative and user-friendly website with the support of a new partner in web design. Related to this, there is a need for a



regular risk assessment exercise to review and assess the market as a whole from which to draw conclusions and develop appropriate strategies.

Internal communication within and between departments was seen to be effective in both formal and informal modes of interaction, consolidated by well-documented procedural guidelines. The centre is owned and managed by the Owner/Director (along with her husband), who is present for about 70% of the time. She shares an office with the Centre Manager (currently also carrying out the role of academic manager) and the Academic Support Manager. The Centre Manager, Director of Studies (when in post), accounts and finance manager and Sales and Marketing Managers are directly accountable to the Owner Director. They in turn manage their own teams of support staff, which include the registrar team at the front desk. The management structure appears appropriate to the size and activity of the organisation as a whole. However, although, arrangements have been made to share the duties of the currently unfilled post of Director of Studies between the Centre Manager, Senior Teacher and Academic Support Manager, there is a need to fill this post as soon as possible. Throughout the centre, there is an impressive culture of encouragement of staff to provide feedback and provide input to centre-wide decisions at all levels of activity.

The centre satisfactorily operates within the guidelines set out by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

The subject of the incoming EU-wide GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) legislation was raised. The HR manager has already followed a short training course in this area.

Enrolment and administrative procedures are clear and easily understood by prospective clients, starting with an initial visit to the website or direct contact with the centre and throughout the ensuing process. The centre operates a secure and well managed system of data collection and dissemination for all the centre's activities.

Recommendations

- Treat the prospective appointment of an academic manager as a priority in order that the appointed post-holder be part of the decision-making team for strategic management as soon as possible.
- Review the content and format of all job descriptions within the centre. (See also Section 11).
- Monitor the current status of the Cert TESOL training course and delete reference from website if the course is not resumed.

Requirements: none



2. Teaching and Learning (Eaquals General Charter, 1.2; Charter For Course Participants 1,2, 3)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

- 2.1 The pedagogical approach and methods reflect the institution's educational philosophy.
- 2.2 The quality of course delivery consistently provides opportunities for effective learning.
- 2.3 Lessons are planned with reference to the course programme and the learning and motivational needs of individuals and the group; specified learning outcomes are shared with learners.
- 2.4 The opportunities offered for learning are varied, making use of available technology and resources.
- 2.5 Learners have the opportunity to develop their study skills and to share responsibility for their own learning.

The inspection took place when there were 84 students on the roll, about half of its capacity of 170, which is normally achieved during the peak summer months. Courses offered were mainly of general English, ranging from CEFR A2 to C1 levels. There were also a small number of business courses, IELTS preparation courses, elective courses such as Communication Skills, and a small number of one-to-one courses. All course types and levels were observed, except the one-to-one courses and Young Learner courses as none were taking place at the time of the inspection. There was no Teacher-Training course at this time. There were eight teachers available for observation during the inspection. All of those teaching classes were observed, some more than once, and Inspectors began by conducting a longer joint observation of one teacher for standardisation purposes.

It was clear that the centre takes as its priority the realisation of its stated aims at the point of delivery, i.e. in the classroom, and there was a high level of consistency of approach to class management and methodology which was adopted by all teachers. There was evidence of effective initial training and continuing development amongst the teaching staff in this in various aspects, notably in the full integration of pronunciation into all aspects of the lessons. There was also considerable individual and group attention provided for students in the form of negotiation of the following week's lesson content on each Friday. In tandem with this, Inspectors observed a high level of sensitivity to individual students shown by teachers. In addition Teachers' own linguistic awareness and competence were extremely good, all of which contributed valuably to a good level of teaching quality, which put the student first and provided opportunities for effective learning to take place. Planning of individual lessons was thorough, based on the quality of comprehensively devised schemes of work. Intended learning outcomes were generally made clear for students, although a higher degree of consistency of presentation in this regard would be beneficial (see below).

Areas of good practice observed by the Inspectors were as follows:

1. There was a consistency amongst teachers of integration of pronunciation in all phases of the lessons observed, including correction and practice. This also featured prominently in reading and writing lessons where pronunciation and intonation of items of vocabulary and grammar were dealt with effectively to enhance the learning experience.
2. There was an awareness amongst teachers of the importance of maximizing class time to fully involve students in practice tasks during which they worked on solving tasks through the medium of the target language. This often involved an original approach to the exploitation of the course book or other materials. Although there were occasional instances of excessive teacher talking time and although on occasions student group work and feedback could have been a little more focused (see below), the elements of this often-neglected element of methodology were seen to be in place
3. There was an interesting range of original resources used, incorporating different media including video, audio, smartphone apps, and smartboards alongside the more traditional book and exercise materials. This presented a varied set of materials which was appropriate for the mainly younger age group and interests of the students.

Areas which may benefit from attention to further enhance teacher performance are as follows:

1. More work on the checking of understanding of instructions given to students.



2. More careful setting up by teachers of the aims and objectives of group or pair tasks which would result in more focused feedback, ensuring that students concentrate on its content and delivery more thoroughly.
3. A greater degree of consistency with regard to the identifying, presenting and describing weekly and lesson-by-lesson desired outcomes. Consistency and content in this area from teachers to teacher was seen to be patchy on the basis of lessons observed.

It was noted that all classes were taught by a single teacher. Whilst recognising that administratively this was a more straightforward way of timetabling, dividing classes at a similar level between more than one teacher is often found to be beneficial.

Points of Excellence

2.1 and 2.2 are excellent because the statements of intent described by the centre to its students in terms of methodological approach and attention to individual needs are carried out consistently and effectively on a practical level throughout the centre.

2.4 is excellent because teachers consistently make use of up-to-date teaching and learning approaches which utilise modern technology to great effect, including, audio, video, smartboards and smartphones alongside more traditional approaches suitable for the age and interests of the students.

Recommendations

- **Set up group tasks with a more consistently defined and focused intended outcome which can be fully linguistically realised during the feedback phase.**
- Ensure that the understanding of task instructions and language explanations are consistently checked in order that students are fully aware of both task directives and linguistic concepts throughout the lesson.
- **Establish a greater degree of consistency in the means of identification and presentation of desired outcomes for each individual lesson as well as sequence of lessons from each teacher.**

Requirements: none



3. Course Design and Supporting System (Eaquals General Charter 1.2; Charter for Course Participants 2.2, 2.4, 2.6,)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

3.1 There is a statement of the institution's educational philosophy and written descriptions of its learning programmes, including course objectives and content.

3.2 All language course programmes are specified by levels which refer to the CEFR, and learning objectives are related to the global descriptors of CEFR levels.

3.3 There is an academic management and coordination structure, with supporting systems, which ensure the implementation of the institution's educational philosophy.

The centre takes pride in placing the client, the student, at the heart of all its activities at the point of delivery and considers any statements relating to the style and content of the teaching to be of key importance. In the message to students on the centre's own web page, the centre undertakes to ensure that all students have the opportunity to improve their English quickly, reach their learning goals and enjoy their time in London. They are also provided with a personal study plan, as well as individual attention and support throughout their course to ensure rapid progress and achievement of learning objectives. For this reason, teachers are trained and coached in ways of reflecting the centre's professed approach to teaching and learning at all times. This is also reflected in the syllabus documents, the course materials and the teachers' own schemes of work. Teachers commented that they are given sufficient freedom to personalize their course content for their own specific group of students within this structure.

The centre's level system for General English courses matches the CEFR scale, ranging from A1 to C2, levels A2 to C1 being in operation at the time of the inspection. In General English courses, students can choose to study from three to six class hours per day by selecting a Standard, a Standard Plus, an Intensive, or a Super-Intensive option. There are also options to study one and a half hours per day or up to seven and a half hours. IELTS courses are also offered.

Teachers are provided with very clear procedural regulations and guidelines regarding class records and logging of results and teaching programmes.

The various documentation produced by the centre and used to develop course and lesson content appears as follows:

1. Syllabus and course overview document

This includes a number of sections under the following headings: course organisation and design, enrolment and its effect on the academic programme, the school philosophy and methodology, student progress monitoring, additional activities, and directives relating to the schemes of work.

The scheme of work directive includes the following: CEFR global descriptors at each level in the form of Can-Do statements, with further can-do statements under the headings of lexical items, grammar points, can-do statements for skills and sub-skills including reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, and intonation/pronunciation. Whilst the format acknowledges the CEFR rationale of stating desired outcomes, these are frequently described in the form of lists of grammatical forms and lexical areas.

2. Course implementation

This document (the heading is misspelt in the file document and needs correction) lists the various levels and the main course book to be used in its delivery.

3. Scheme of work template

This indicates the various headings under which teachers design their lesson sequencing on a weekly basis, the content of which is checked by the Senior Teacher. Teachers plan under the headings of topic, grammar, lexis, function and skills, with a further column identifying the materials to be used.

4. Lesson plan template



These were submitted for each of the observed segments during the inspection and are also completed for in-house observation sessions, but are not compulsory for day-to-day lesson planning. They are arranged under the headings of main aim, target language (usually in the form of a grammatical item for presentation or a lexical set), anticipated problems, materials used, group profile and timetable fit.

All in all, this suite of documents, from rationale to point of delivery, covers the various stages involved in providing teachers with relevant support in order to produce valid and coherent schemes of work and individual lesson plans. Inspectors appreciate the complexity of matching this rationale with what essentially is a coursebook-based course with the added issue of new students joining a ten-week course cycle every Monday. They feel that every effort is made, with considerable success, to provide students with course materials and methodological approaches which match the centre's stated aim. Statements of main aims or objectives for a set of lessons or for an individual lesson, in the schemes of work and lesson plans, need to be more clearly and consistently defined as specific and intended learning outcomes in terms of language use as opposed to grammar points, lexical sets linked to the topic, or language functions. In order to achieve this, the current schemes of work templates, which serve an important role in developing sequences of lessons, should be reviewed to reflect more specifically the CEFR level descriptors, both global and in more detail and to additionally accommodate examples of interactional and transactional language.

Despite the current temporary absence of a full-time Director of Studies, the centre management have successfully distributed the various academic management duties between the Centre Manager, who herself has wide experience in academic management, the Senior Teacher and the Academic Support Manager. Teachers in the focus group, attended by six of the eight available teachers, stated that they were happy with the current situation and felt that they received adequate academic support. They were not aware of any significant reduction in the quality of day-to-day support. On the evidence of observed lesson segments, it appears that implementation of the centre's educational philosophy is being realized. Clearly there is a need for the recruitment of an appropriately experienced Director of Studies as numbers grow into the summer and longer-term projects require attention (see references to these throughout the report). However, Inspectors appreciate the efforts being made to ensure the right choice is made.

The centre may wish to consider introducing an EAP element to its course offer through the development of an EAP syllabus, in order to offer young students with aspirations of higher education a relevant course of study.

Recommendations

- **Make every effort to appoint a suitable academic manager within a short time frame and preferable no later than the end of May, which will enable Inspectors on the follow-up visit for Young Learners and Cert TESOL course (if running) to discuss the development of the role.**
- **Revisit the main syllabus document with the aim of allowing it to more effectively underpin the centre's educational rationale, to refer more specifically to the CEFR descriptors and can-do statements and to make it more accessible as a starting point for teachers to develop their schemes of work.**
- **Develop the format of the Schemes of Work to reflect and refer more clearly and directly to the CEFR level descriptors, both global and specific and to place a greater emphasis on interactional and transactional language alongside the current focus on language systems.**
- Consider the benefits of introducing an EAP course offer to prospective students wishing to progress to higher education.
- Correct typographical, grammatical and punctuation errors in the current syllabus document as amendments are carried out.

Requirements: none



4. Assessment and Certification (Eaquals General Charter 1.2; Charter for Course Participants 1.2, 1.3, 2.10, 3.1)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

- 4.1 Assessment procedures are compatible with the institution's educational philosophy and course objectives.
- 4.2 Placement procedures are appropriate to the learning context and to learners' needs.
- 4.3 Systems for assessing language competence provide reliable, valid and fair means of evaluating progress and achievement in a way that is appropriate for the course and the learners.
- 4.4 Reports and certificates issued to learners indicate their achievements in terms of the course objectives and content. They provide a reliable statement of the level achieved.
- 4.5 Where information on public examinations is provided, relevant advice and support is given to learners.

Before attending the centre, students complete an on-line placement test which consists of 40 questions, testing items such as discreet grammar points, verb forms and tenses, prepositions and lexis. On arrival, students are also given an oral interview by a teacher, who works from a pre-set list of questions to ensure consistency of level. Students also produce a piece of writing describing their perceived linguistic needs. Based on the results of these elements, students are placed in an appropriate class, with the proviso that they may be changed if they or the teacher feel they have been misplaced at the outset. The online placement test would benefit from some amendment as a small number of questions had more than one possible correct answer.

The minimum period of stay for a student is one week and weekly assessment tests are carried out to cater for all students at the centre. Management of such tests takes the form described in the teacher's guide as follows:

'Once a term, the Senior Teacher prepares a testing rota which outlines the skills and functions to be tested every week across the School. The form is displayed on the staffroom notice board. The results of weekly tests are garnered for analysis and further planning.'

In practice, test content is extracted fully or partly from the relevant sections of the course book being used and teachers are at liberty to supplement and adapt these items as required to suit their assessment requirements. They can also create their own complete tests, although Inspectors were informed that test items of this type should be approved by the Senior Teacher. Teachers are further provided with guidance as follows:

'Progress tests measure students' competence in the following areas of language: integrated skills (receptive and productive), grammar, pronunciation and lexis. Students' class participation and independent study is also taken into account. Types of tests used for measuring students' attainment are divided into objective and subjective. The former consisting of multiple choice questions, matching and true or false statements; the latter- cloze exercises, or gap filling activities, paragraph writing, Continuous assessment and feedback are carried out throughout the course.'

It was not clear to what extent these tests covered the range of language and skills areas described above in practice, but the impression given was of the emphasis being on extraction from the course book test materials and a main focus on grammar and lexis with less focus on the testing of integrated skills. If tests of this kind are administered on a weekly basis this is understandable as the gap-filling or multiple choice style of testing is easier to create and to assess. Also, the existence of the testing rota described above indicates a more rigidly controlled focus on what is to be tested than is suggested in other areas of the guidelines and documentation. This may be an area which will require some attention in the future in order to attain consistency of message and to provide assessment content which truly reflects course content and is valid in its testing of intended learning outcomes in the form of can-do statements (see also below).

Formal testing is carried out on a termly (ten-weekly) basis under the following guidance from the teacher's guide:



‘In the concluding week of their course, students are given a final test, which forms part of their overall assessment. This test is based on material studied throughout the level. There is also a writing component where students are invited to express themselves freely on a given topic.’

Again, the bulk of material to form the test seems to be extracted from the course book but may also be supplemented to a greater or lesser extent with input and material from the teacher or from a bank of available materials.

Teachers who create their own test items, are obliged to have them checked for validity by the Senior Teacher to ensure they conform to the appropriate level. Inspectors generally approved of this level of flexibility within the assessment system, but also a greater degree of control needs to be exercised to ensure that level progress or achievement tests are fair and relevant across the levels. This requires a stricter form of validation procedures, something which a Director of Studies would be advised to focus on when recruited.

Inspectors were a little concerned that the directives to teachers with regard to setting of weekly assessment tests and end-of-course exit tests are vague. Teachers are told that ‘assessment can cover elements of the following: progress/achievement, dictation, oral interviews, written assignments, short talks, role plays and simulations, presentations, project work and mock exams.’ It is difficult to see how all these different elements can be effectively monitored in the form of weekly and exit tests to enable different teachers to assess the same level across a number of classes. It seemed that the most common form of testing was in the form of items extracted from the assessment section of whichever course book is being used at the time and that much of the testing limited itself to grammatical and lexical items covered during the course. The level descriptors within the CEFR seemed to take a back seat in terms of the degree to which assessment of their mastery had been achieved. Work is needed to ensure that all intended learning outcomes have been assessed by the end of the course, perhaps in the form of a table to be used as a type of checklist. This would reduce the reliance on the course book tests.

The centre provides individual students with a tutorial with their teacher every four or five weeks (there was some contradiction on their regularity from two different sources), which focus on students’ progress, learning needs and performance in assessment tasks. A high level of care and attention and also dedication are required to provide this service, which was roundly appreciated by students and effectively complemented the assessment procedures.

A particular strength of the centre is its attention to detail when producing reports on the student’s time at the centre. Teachers devote a good deal of time in the production of these reports which provide details, not only of their progress and achievement, but of their attitude and level of participation within the class. Each Friday a graduation ceremony takes place during which students are presented with their certificates which carry a description of the level at which the course was studied, the time they have attended and a reference to the CEFR level descriptors. This may also present an opportunity to investigate the possibility to incorporate the award of an Equals certificate, details of which can be found on the Equals website and which may also serve as a valuable promotional element for the centre. [Recommendations](#)

- **Review the content and procedures for developing and monitoring the content of weekly and exit assessment tasks in order to achieve a greater degree of consistency of level across different classes within the same level. Take into account of the points made above.**
- Review the content of the online placement test to ensure there is not more than one possible answer to each question.
- **Create a system which ensures that all intended learning outcomes are assessed by the end of a course with a suitable table or checklist in order to reduce the possibility of omission of key outcomes and to reduce over-reliance on course books to provide assessment items.**
- **Draw up a series of test specifications for test writers to follow in order to facilitate a greater degree of consistency regarding level and test type.**
- Refer to support materials and assessment rationale available offered on the Equals website to assist staff in the production of assessment items; identify a member of staff to oversee the area in order to develop competence in the writing of assessment items.

Requirements: none



5. Academic Resources (Eaquals General Charter 1.2, 1.3; Charter for Course Participants 2.5)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

5.1 The course books or other core course materials, online learning platforms and resources, and reference materials reflect course objectives and the methodology used.

5.2 There is a system for monitoring learning material developed in-house.

5.3 All equipment and electronic connectivity is accessible and well maintained.

Course books are reviewed and changed regularly, on average every ten weeks, which represents a course level or cycle. The centre fully involves the teaching staff in the selection process and encourages input and suggestions. The rationale of the syllabus is that it can be used to interpret the content of any book at a specific level, the 'go-to' document being the Scheme of work which emanates from the teachers' choices of materials to extract and use from the course books in consultation with the students in any particular class.

Students are able to either buy the main course book as an addition to their course fees, or rent the book on a sliding fee scale, depending on their length of stay.

Whilst the core of the lesson content seems to logically emanate from the core course book, there is also a selection of clearly labelled and classified books and class sets of supplementary materials and ideas books in the teachers' resources room. This provision would benefit from review, during which some of the older supplementary commercial materials could be replaced and the overall provision expanded. Teachers may also use websites from which to extract and adapt materials. There is a database of materials produced in-house but this needs to be further developed and would add considerably to the materials options already available. Teachers are at liberty to design their own materials, some of which can be adopted by the centre on approval by the Senior Teacher regarding its quality of presentation and content. This is an area which would benefit from long-term development in order to build up an extensive provision of materials developed in-house. The source of all materials originating from commercial publications or media is acknowledged and the centre complies with the regulations indicated by the Copyright Licensing Authority scheme.

All classrooms currently in use are equipped with Interactive White Boards and computers connected by Wifi to the internet and Inspectors saw frequent utilisation of such resources. This included audio and video clips, use of the smart pen for writing, and various forms of projection. Teachers have clearly been trained in the use of such resources and are at ease with their use. There was some concern expressed by teachers, however, as a number of the IWBs are sometimes faulty because of their age and need replacing. Wi-Fi connectivity is good. There is also a large room in the centre, the Theatre Room, for student use with more than twenty computer terminals available. The teachers' room also offers adequate computer facilities.

Teachers also have the benefit of access to the Teacher Training (TT) library of books which is available in the TT library.

Although the centre does not currently offer courses leading to the Trinity CertTESOL, there are plans to reintroduce it in 2018. If this is not the case, reference to the course on the website should be deleted. (See recommendation under Section 1).

Recommendations

- Review and develop the provision of commercially produced supplementary materials when finances permit.
- Review and develop the database of materials produced in-house which can be easily accessed by teachers. Embark on a project, the aim of which would be to extend and expand the database of materials produced in-house for use in courses as a supplement to the main course books.
- Initiate a programme of replacement of IWBs, beginning with those that are becoming less reliable.

Requirements

None



6. Learning Environment (Eaquals General Charter 1, Charter for Course Participants 2.3; Staff Charter 2)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

- 6.1 The teaching and study environment meets the requirements of course programmes and learners.
- 6.2 Any non-pedagogical facilities and/or spaces required for the services offered are fit for purpose and well maintained.
- 6.3 Arrangements are made to protect the health and ensure the safety of learners and staff.

The centre manages to combine the historic charm of its two adjoined leased Georgian houses (previously there were three but one is now sublet to a rival language school), with a number of modern features to present an inviting and professional impression to all visitors, students and staff. Options for the physical development of the premises are limited as the buildings are 'listed' which limits structural modifications. There is a clearly signed entrance at ground level, leading into an entrance hall which is attractively furnished with a TV-sized monitor on which up-to-date information is displayed. The walls of this entrance hall are also furnished with visual and textual information relating to staff members and promotional information about the centre, including a plaque stating its membership of Eaquals. Unfortunately, this plaque currently displays the old Eaquals logo and will need to be changed as soon as is practically possible.

To the right of this entrance hall is the reception area comprising a front desk which is permanently staffed, normally by two registrars. The large main office, which accommodates the Owner/Director, the Centre Manager and the academic team, is located next to the reception area, allowing frequent informal communication to take place.

The houses comprise four floors, with classrooms found on the ground, first, second and third floors and finance and marketing/sales departments on the fourth floor. Classrooms can comfortably accommodate full classes of the stated maximum number of students, and there are smaller classrooms for one-to-one or small group classes. These classrooms are furnished with small study tables which can be arranged in various formats and which allow students to refer to their materials comfortably. Walls and display boards have a standardised content, including phonemic charts, maps of the United Kingdom, transport maps, rules and regulations, emergency evacuation plans and instructions and other key information. All 13 classrooms in use are equipped with Interactive White Boards (IWBs) and computers with wireless connectivity, enabling teachers to access audio, video and other materials from the classroom itself. Rooms are well-lit, adequately heated, provide a safe and comfortable learning environment for both students and teachers, and benefit from natural light. The centre's location, which although near one of London's busiest thoroughfares at Holborn Station, is in a quiet street leading to Bloomsbury Square, allows for windows to be opened in the summer months with no intrusive traffic noise.

The basement, accessed as all other floors by means of a single staircase, comprises a staff room, a well-maintained and attractively presented canteen/cafeteria, a teachers' resources room, a further room which is used by students to relax and eat but also doubles as a young learners' room in the summer months, a room with a pool table which can also be used as a room for parties and other celebrations, and an open-air patio.

In addition to the various staff and student areas already described the Theatre Room, fully equipped with around twenty computer terminals, can also be used for computer-based lessons, self-access for students and staff, and also for larger events such as graduation ceremonies and induction days.

The well-maintained bathroom facilities are located on each half-landing in each house and are adequate for the student numbers accommodated. Because of the age and layout of the buildings, the centre is unable to fully accommodate disabled students and it is difficult to



see how this could be arranged, given the legal and physical restrictions on making any changes. The centre is, however, able to offer the use of a designated multi-faith room.

Inspectors noted that, although efforts have been made to present a modern learning environment within a historic location, and although the building is regularly decorated and well-maintained.

Health and safety measures are a particular strength of the centre, are fully documented and are supervised by a member of the accounts/finance team who doubles as health and safety officer. He ensures that evacuation procedures and routes are kept up-to-date and that evacuation drills are carried out and logged every quarter. He also ensures that the well-located CO2 and foam fire extinguishers on each floor are fully maintained and certificated, with four members of staff fully trained to use these in the case of an emergency. The Health and Safety Officer also tests the fire alarms weekly and any incidents are fully logged. He also tests the zonal control panel every week and logs the results. Evidence of this attention to detail was noted by Inspectors and it is clear that every effort is made to ensure the safety and security of all users of the building. The centre is also equipped throughout with emergency lighting in the event of loss of power for any reason.

There are six first aiders (three for each building) and well-stocked first aid boxes which comply with the national regulations for such a resource. The first aiders are regularly trained by the St Johns Ambulance organisation and their identities made known to staff and students. Three designated fire marshals are also up-to-date with their training. Photographs of all staff members are displayed in reception with their various roles clearly indicated. The centre has appointed a fire protection company which carries out a formal check of fire protection services every three months. In addition, the centre undergoes portable appliance testing every two years by an outside company.

The same Health and Safety officer is also responsible for security within the accommodation residences owned by the centre and Inspectors observed the CCTV cameras in action, operated from the centre, which cover all entrances and communal areas of these residence houses which are located in the Archway area of North London. (See also under Section 7)

Points of Excellence

- 6.3 is excellent because of the high standards employed by the centre in ensuring the safety and security of all users of the building, the attention to ensuring that all safety equipment and evacuation procedures are fully operated and supervised by a dedicated staff member, who ensures that equipment is regularly and fully tested, and because the centre management have ensured that there is a team of fully trained fire marshalls and first aiders always available amongst the staff.

Recommendations

None

Requirements: none



7. Client Services (Eaquals General Charter 2.3;, 3.1; Charter For Course Participants 2.8)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

7.1 Advice and support is available to learners and sponsors throughout the course, including welfare arrangements, where appropriate.

7.2 There are systems for monitoring and administering the provision of any leisure programme and/or accommodation. Any social programme takes account of learners' interests.

The informative Student Handbook makes the following undertaking:

'Here at Bloomsbury, we care about each and every one of our students. Your welfare and safety is important to us and we want to make sure you enjoy your experience in London as much as possible.'

The centre has client services procedures in place and a caring staff well versed in such procedures and willing to deal with client issues as a priority. Students in the focus group meeting confirmed that the staff were attentive to their requirements, their queries, and their welfare. Students are dealt with in a personal, helpful manner in all aspects of their day-to-day dealings in the centre and by all members of personnel. There is a weekly student welfare meeting which takes place at 12.20 on Tuesdays. Queries and requests for guidance are routinely dealt with as a matter of priority and information available for all aspects of the student's time at the centre are clearly described in the informative student handbook and through the information provided within the centre. The Centre Manager is experienced in 'safeguarding' and there is a 'stay safe' policy which helps students carry out their day-to-day activities in a big city as safely and securely as possible.

The informative student handbook provides emergency telephone numbers, information on public transport, information on student visas (the centre has details of a student's visa status on all references to that student, from class lists to enrolment details; these are usually in the form of short term study visas or Tier 4 visas), personal welfare matters, advice on banks, council tax, National Insurance numbers for longer term students, accommodation options, student discounts and other areas.

There are clear guidelines also in the student handbook on expectations of behaviour and other disciplinary matters, grievance procedures, attendance requirements, and teaching approaches.

Students are consulted and informed on a regular basis regarding their learning needs, lesson content (through group negotiation), and their progress. This last area is a particular strength of the centre with teachers devoting time every four weeks to detailed and helpful individual tutorial sessions with their students during which they discuss all aspects of the student's journey through their course, with an emphasis placed on general progress measured by progress tests, future needs and development and suggestions for self-study. The centre offers courses for those students wishing to sit the IELTS, TOEIC and Cambridge exams.

The centre offers courses to young learners, although there were none taking place during the inspection, and Inspectors saw information on the various measures taken to ensure their care, including DBS checks on staff appropriacy for dealing with young people and documentation required of parents before accepting their children for study. Within the centre there are facilities which are set aside for young learners and the centre has recently incorporated parent and child courses in which parents accompany their children and also follow a course of study. Accommodation for young learners is in the form of host family homes through an outside agency which carries out all the necessary and legal checks on suitability.

The centre offers a rich and varied programme of social events in the form of local walks, museum and other visits, coffee and conversation, visits to traditional markets, and more. All are fully staffed, usually by teachers from the centre, and well organised. Students and staff commented that, as London offers so much that students can do outside the confines of the centre, some of the social programme options failed to attract enough participants and had to be cancelled.

Accommodation choices come in the form of four options:



1. The centre owns three houses in the north London area of Archway, about 40 minutes travel time from the centre which can accommodate up to nine students each. They are listed under the regulation of homes of multiple occupation (HMOs) by Camden Council and conform to all the related regulations. Two of these are listed as 'standard' accommodation and one as 'superior'. All were visited by one Inspector (who lives locally) on the Monday following the inspection as there was no time to carry out these visits during the inspection days. They were found to provide adequate accommodation, with self-catering facilities in the form of kitchens, good bathroom facilities and a range of important information on notice boards. Bedrooms mainly contained two single beds and desks for students to work.
2. The centre works with a partner agency which vets and provides suitable homestay accommodation with private householders, mainly in the Brixton and Willesden areas of London (to the south and the north-west). This type of accommodation was not visited but Inspectors saw evidence of the partnership with the outside agency and its compliance with strict regulations, including DBS checks. From student feedback and from documentation seen, this arrangement offers high quality options for homestay students. Nevertheless an independent visit from the centre to all homestay facilities would provide extra assurance that standards are maintained.
3. The centre also offers accommodation through commercial student residence companies in various parts of London. These also comply with strict regulations and are checked regularly in order to maintain their status. Students staying in this kind of accommodation expressed their general satisfaction with the facilities on offer.
4. Some students opt to arrange their own accommodation, either after being at the centre for some time when they get to know the city, or from the beginning, usually with friends.

The centre also offers an airport and station transfer service.

It was noted that a significant number of students were either returning to the centre for the first or second time or were attending on the recommendation of friends, family and acquaintances who had already attended courses at the centre. The reasons given by students in the focus group was a combination of the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff, the size of school, the good value offered for the course fee, and the central location.

Points of Excellence

- 7.1 is excellent because of the priority given to student wellbeing in all aspects of their stay. Students are consistently well informed and carefully advised, both in their study programme, notably through the tutorial system, and also in their social life, with great care provided to ensure that they remain safe and secure through the provision of guidelines, important contact information and personal attention.

Recommendations

- Review the social programme content and format so that it may attract a higher number of students.
- Initiate a regular programme of visits to homestay providers from representatives of the LEC.

Requirements: none



8. Quality Assurance (Eaquals General Charter 1.3; Charter for Course Participants 2.2, 2.7, 3.2; Staff Charter 4, 6)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

8.1 There are systems to foster a culture of quality through continuous evaluation, reflection and action.

8.2 The learning experience is fully monitored by management systems (including regular classroom observations) which are used to improve the quality of all services.

8.3 There are procedures which enable learners and sponsors to give regular feedback relating to the academic and other services provided.

The centre fosters a culture of attention to maintaining and improving quality through its internal development and preparation for the regular inspections from Eaquals and also from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) a quote from the report of which is published in the promotional material on its website stating that the centre 'exceeds expectations in each section of the framework.' In addition, the centre carries out regular internal self-assessment of all its procedures and processes, although this is an area which could be further developed through the adoption of a more systematic approach to evaluation, reflection and action, which would also cover the areas of staff performance review (see Section 9), syllabus development (see Section 3) and job descriptions, some of which were clearly out of date and did not always accurately describe the duties carried out (see Section 11).

There is an open-door policy within the centre which encourages all staff to make suggestions or to raise issues in any area of concern and these are taken seriously and discussed by management. Teachers felt very strongly that the various departments and the management within the centre encouraged them to take an active part in decision-making at all levels and there was much encouragement for the development of a corporate and consistent style at the point of delivery which has already been described in the identifiable style of teaching observed in classes.

A number of forms of teacher observation are carried out throughout the year, including drop-in observation sessions and more formal observation visits which follow a specific pattern and are accompanied by appropriate documentation relating to all phases: pre-observation, during the observation and post-observation two-way feedback. All documentation is signed off by both parties as a fair record of the process. Documentation would benefit from review. It included a number of 'tick' boxes for different phases and focus points for the teaching as well as specifying particular areas in need of improvement. More emphasis should be placed on the link between these areas for improvement and the content of the CPD programme. The number of tick boxes can deflect the observer from being able to focus fully on the teaching taking place. These observation sessions should take place every six months, although there has been a reduction in frequency during the absence of a full time Director of Studies. The last recorded formal observation was in October 2017. Documentation for this and several other observation sessions from earlier dates were seen by Inspectors.

Students are invited to submit feedback on the early part of their experience at the centre by means of a first-week feedback questionnaire, which covers all aspects of their stay. A further questionnaire is submitted on leaving the centre. Information is gathered and acted upon from these questionnaires. A review of the way in which feedback is gathered would be of benefit: consider increasing the frequency of feedback from longer-term students, gathering feedback from stakeholders and improving ways of collating, statistically analysing and presenting the results of such feedback to interested parties with a view to using the findings to focus on areas requiring improvement.

Grievance and disciplinary procedures are clearly documented for both clients and staff.

Recommendations

- **Conduct an overview of quality assurance processes and procedures to analyse how quality issues are evaluated, reflected upon and acted upon in every aspect of the operation.**



- Review the approach to the collecting of feedback, from students and other stakeholders and investigate ways of improving the scope, frequency, statistical analysis, presentation of results and resultant action.

Requirements: none



9. Staff Profile and Development (Charter for Course Participants 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7 ; Staff Charter 5, 6, 8,)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Equals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

9.1 The competences, experience and qualifications of managers, teachers and administrative staff are relevant and adequate for each area of responsibility.

9.2 There are systems to provide appropriate support and guidance for all staff including a regular staff performance review.

9.3 There is a formal framework to assure appropriate continuous professional development for all staff.

Inspectors saw documentation relating to regular performance review sessions for all management and administration staff, although available documentation for teacher appraisal was less recent. One longer serving teacher in the focus group confirmed she had been appraised around six months previously. Others in the group were fairly new to the LEC and their appraisal period had not yet been reached. Documentation relating to performance review interviews was seen and deemed adequate for purpose with reviews and follow-up procedures built in to the process. The LEC states that such reviews should take place every six months and there have been some delays in the carrying out of performance reviews for teachers in the absence of a full time Director of Studies. Inspectors urge management to carry out any outstanding teacher appraisals within a short time frame and to aim to reinstate the declared frequency targets as soon as possible. It was also noted by the Inspectors that neither the job description for the Centre Manager nor for the Director of Studies is included any reference to the conducting of performance reviews as a responsibility and this should be rectified immediately.

On the evidence of lesson observation segments, it was clear to the Inspectors that teachers had been well and consistently trained in their methodological approach as much of the observed teaching followed a similar pattern and demonstrated similar qualities as described in Section 2. Inspectors saw a documented programme of induction for new teachers and of continuous development offered to teaching staff, normally led by the Director of Studies, Senior teacher or Centre Manager, and in some cases by a member of the teaching staff. Identified areas of teaching in need of attention should receive a higher profile in forming the content of CPD sessions as a matter of course. The degree of obligation on teachers to attend all or some of the internal sessions in the programme was not clear. In the Teacher's Handbook there is a management statement of intent to 'provide regular teacher development sessions every third Thursday of each month' which states that 'teachers are expected to participate in on-site CPD sessions and are also encouraged to attend external workshops.' However, on the attendance sheet for many of the sessions the attendance represented considerably fewer attendees and remuneration is not provided for attendance.

There were also events of academic interest organised by other centres in the London area which were made known to the teachers and available for them to attend.

It would be of use to both the individual teacher and to the LEC as a whole, for teachers to refer to the European Profiling Grid on the Equals website and also to the Equals Framework for Language Teacher Training and Development in relation to their longer-term development.

Administrative staff do most of their training on the job with input from colleagues. All staff were clear about their training needs in this regard.

The Human Resources Manager has attended a training course relating to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (see also Section 1).

All current teachers are adequately qualified, either with a CELTA or, in the case of the Senior Teacher a partially completed DELTA certificate. The Centre Manager holds the DELTA certificate. As Young Learner courses continue to attract more and more students, it would be of benefit for management to investigate the advantages of providing selected teachers with the opportunity of following a Young Learners course or add-on offered by a number of awarding bodies.



Recommendations

- **Ensure that any delays in the performance reviews for teaching staff are remedied immediately.**
- **Make it a priority for the incoming Director of Studies, when appointed, to review performance review procedure.**
- **Develop the continuous development programme for teachers and establish clear guidelines as to the level of obligation for attendance.**
- With regard to teacher development, encourage teachers to consult and learn from the European Profiling Grid on the Eaquals website as part of their longer-term development and also to access the Eaquals Framework for Language Teacher Training and Development.
- Enable selected teachers to attend training courses or add-on courses for the teaching of Young Learners or their online equivalent.
- Invite a member of staff to attend conferences such as those held by Eaquals, IATEFL or the British Council, with the undertaking to feed back to the staff on return.

Requirements: none



10. Staff Employment Terms (Staff Charter 1,2, 3, 4, 5,6, 7, 8 9.10)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Equals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

10.1 All staff hold current employment contracts; these conform to local requirements, as confirmed by the statutory declaration of the institution.

10.2 The terms and conditions of employment offered to staff are fair and comply with all statutory requirements as stated in a statutory declaration made by the LEC.

All staff hold current employment contracts which clearly state their various terms and conditions and which conform to national and local requirements. These are supplemented by job descriptions for each role, some of which, especially those relating to managerial and administrative roles, require updating and a review of their format. (See Section 11)

Teachers are currently employed on zero-hour contracts, normally either of 15 or 30 hours of classroom teaching. Whilst teachers agreed that efforts are made by management to ensure continuity of employment from one month to the next, frustration was expressed in the teacher focus group at the lack of security offered by the zero-hour contract agreement, quite apart from the difficulty encountered in other aspects of life when working on this kind of contract. They felt that the lack of a more secure contract made them more likely to seek alternative or extra employment despite their satisfaction with the team, the support and the atmosphere within the LEC. In the light of this, management would be wise to consider upgrading a small team of core teaching staff to a more permanent form of contract in recognition of their contribution and in order to ensure they maintain valued teachers with a longer-term formal commitment to the LEC.

Teaching staff are paid hourly at a rate that is lower than the average rate offered by some of the local competitors in the sector. Despite this, and despite the high number of teaching hours teachers are contracted for, teaching staff were quick to point out that they appreciated the general quality of management and support and very much enjoyed being part of the current teaching team. Several teachers on part-time agreements work in other centres in addition to Bloomsbury to supplement their income and were able to compare these conditions on a practical basis. All this makes the comment in the above paragraph regarding the need to stabilise the teaching staff even more important. Pay, tax arrangements and social security payments are all dealt with by the Accounts Manager who was able to show records of all being in order. Teachers receive one week of holiday (or payment in lieu) for every thirteen weeks worked.

Recommendations

- **Consider ways of maintaining a committed teaching staff and increasing job security by creating a core team of teachers through the awarding of more permanent contracts.**

Requirements: none



11. Internal Communications (Eaquals General Charter 1.1, 2.3; Staff Charter 1, 4, 8, 10)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category in most areas but some action must be taken to fully comply with Eaquals standards. (Grade 2.5)

11.1 The responsibilities, lines of accountability and channels of communication among members of management and/or staff are clearly defined and documented.

11.2 There is formal, documented, communication and consultation between staff and managers, scheduled as appropriate.

11.3 Information is available to staff about the institution, its mission and any planned developments.

11.4 Grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place for staff and are known to them.

11.5 Information about Eaquals and its resources is available to staff and learners.

There is a clear organisational chart which indicates the Owner/Director as line manager of a team of managers, all apparently at the same level of accountability. This team includes the Accounts Manager, Sales Manager, Centre Manager, Director of Studies and Web Director. Inspectors noted that the organisational chart still featured the Director of Studies and the name of the last postholder. This may be because the chart was submitted to Eaquals at a time when it reflected the LEC structure at that time, but in any event, Inspectors felt that some form of documentation should be produced and made available to staff which reflects the current, albeit temporary situation.

All managers manage their own teams of colleagues; the Centre Manager is responsible for the Registrars, the Director of Studies (when in post) for the Academic Support Manager and teaching team (currently the Centre Manager is undertaking this role). The responsibilities, lines of accountability and channels of communication are clearly defined with a great deal of flexibility and willingness by management and staff members to develop their roles organically as the need arises. Unfortunately, this was not reflected in the job descriptions, some of which were seen to require amendment in order to achieve a true reflection of the work carried out by the post holder. Most contain too many detailed bullet-pointed duties which would benefit from being grouped together in themes to make them more clearly understood. There were several instances of duties and responsibilities being currently carried out by staff members which were not included within their job description as their job evolved within the developing direction of the LEC. Regular review is important and post holders frequently being asked to review their own job description under an agreed template or format may be of benefit and form part of the evaluation and reflection cycle as referred to in Section 8. Most importantly, there is a distinct lack of reference to responsibility for the carrying out of annual (or six-monthly) performance reviews in these job descriptions and this must be attended to immediately.

Informal communication works successfully. All members of management and staff felt that there was as rich flow of informal communication between the management team who occupy the main office on the ground floor next to the reception area, with the teaching staff who operate from the basement, and the finance, sales and accounts teams who occupy offices on the top floor. Inspectors noted an atmosphere of hard-working cooperation amongst all staff.

Formal communication is of a good standard. The Academic Support Manager chairs the weekly teachers' meetings and logs action points. The Centre Manager meets with the registrars every Wednesday and, while these meetings are not always minuted, action points are logged where necessary. There are periodic reviews of policy documentation leading to any necessary amendments.

The Human Resources manager works in his post as HR manager for the various branches of the group, including the travel agency and the publication. He maintains the General Data Protection Regulation for all staff and carries out the necessary Disclosure Barring



Service (DBS) procedures for all staff. All personnel files were found to be up to date and well maintained.

Each year the management team, consisting of the Owner/Director, finance manager, Sales Manager and Centre Manager, develop a strategic plan for the following year.

All staff felt that they had the opportunity to express their views and make suggestions and that they were well informed about developments within the LEC. The informative staff handbook provides a wealth of information on procedures and status and includes grievance and disciplinary procedures, details on the LEC's safeguarding policy and procedures and other key information reinforced by details of the LEC's commitment and measures to carry this out.

All staff were fully aware of the role and status of Eaquals membership, although Inspectors felt that the benefits of Eaquals membership nor the services provided by Eaquals for teachers and management amongst its membership were not indicated prominently enough nor sufficiently known or exploited.

Overall, Inspectors recognised as strong points an effective mix of formal and informal communication within the LEC between and amongst all departments, as well as a willingness to share responsibility. Staff are regularly invited to provide input and suggestions to the planning and running of the LEC.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the LEC's organisational chart is maintained up-to-date and produce a temporary version or addendum to the chart when circumstances arise.
- **Review the format and content of job descriptions to reduce the number of discrete bullet points describing individual duties. Replace this format by providing a more general description of wider areas of responsibility.**
- **Ensure job descriptions provide an accurate account of what post-holders do by setting up a process whereby the post-holder amends his or her job description on a regular basis.**
- Give the Eaquals membership a higher and more visible status in all internal documentation and exploit its material and services available on the Eaquals website to a greater degree.

Requirements

- **Address the omission in Job Descriptions of the key responsibility for preparing, conducting and documenting regular performance reviews for all staff. Provide evidence to Eaquals that this has been carried out, at the latest, two months following the submission of this report.**



12. External Communications (Information Charter 1-7)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

12.1 All promotional materials accurately describe the institution's learning services: the range and functionality of resources and/or online tools offered, and other services and facilities.

12.2 Contractual information provided to learners and sponsors is accurate and complete, and expressed in easily understood language.

12.3 Accredited members make information about Eaquals publicly available; they display the Eaquals Charters publicly, and use the Eaquals logo correctly.

All promotional materials accurately describe the LEC's services and facilities. Contractual information, security, types and content of courses, enrolment and payment details are all described in sufficient detail on the LEC's informative website. There is also a wealth of information regarding the LEC's commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing of its students and other customers, with special reference to young learners under the age of 16. (see also Section 7).

The sales and marketing team have employed state of the art approaches to identifying potential clients through careful analysis of visits to the website and they are in the process of redesigning what is already an informative website with the support of a new provider. It is hoped that new features such as a virtual tour of the LEC will further enhance the impact of the new website. A full presentation of client analysis was provided for the Inspectors and showed the diligence and determination required to present such a comprehensive profile to the outside world in such a competitive marketplace.

Information about Eaquals is available and the charters are publicly displayed within the LEC, but Eaquals membership and what it means to be an Eaquals member could be featured more prominently on the website, on the outside hoardings and also within the LEC, including in its documentation, especially given the fact that rival organisations in the area (a number in the same street) are not Eaquals members. Focused promotion of Eaquals and what it means would be of benefit to the LEC. The metal plaque showing LEC membership of Eaquals still features the old logo and this will need renewing as soon as possible.

Communication with Eaquals and fellow Eaquals members was also discussed and this is an area which the LEC could develop further.

Points of Excellence

12.1 is excellent because the dedication and research into client patterns carried out by the sales and marketing team has already resulted in an increase in direct recruitment and has raised the profile of the LEC. The current upgrading of the website will continue to contribute to this.

Recommendations

- **Ensure that the Eaquals logo is displayed correctly and in its revised form in all documentation and display.**
- Raise the prominence of Eaquals membership in all documentation and in promotional materials in order to foster recognition of the LEC as a LEC of high quality.
- Develop a culture of frequent and considered communication with Eaquals and fellow members in order to benefit from the mutual benefits this might bring.

Requirements: none



Section Four: Summary

Areas which have not been inspected in this inspection and need follow-up inspection:

Young Learner courses were not taking place during the visit. These run for most of the year from January.

There was no Teacher Training course taking place at the time of the inspection and no observations were made.

These will require a follow-up inspection during the summer months of 2018.

Summary of requirements

11	Internal Communications	Address the omission in Job Descriptions of the key responsibility for preparing, conducting and documenting regular performance reviews for all staff. Provide evidence to Eqauals that this has been carried out, at the latest, two months following the submission of this report i.e. by mid - April 2018.	Documentation to be sent to the Eqauals Secretariat	by 30 April 2018
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Summary of Points of Excellence

2	Teaching and Learning	2.1 and 2.2 are excellent because the statements of intent described by the LEC to its students in terms of methodological approach and attention to individual needs are carried out consistently and effectively on a practical level throughout the centre. 2.4 is excellent because teachers consistently make use of up-to-date teaching and learning approaches which utilise modern technology to great effect, including, audio, video, smartboards and smartphones alongside more traditional approaches suitable for the age and interests of the students.
6	Learning Environment	6.3 is excellent because of the high standards employed by the LEC in ensuring the safety and security of all users of the building, the attention to ensuring that all safety equipment and evacuation procedures are fully operated and supervised by a dedicated staff member, who ensures that equipment is regularly and fully tested, and because the LEC management have ensured that there is a team of fully trained fire marshalls and first aiders always available amongst the staff.
7	Client Services	7.1 is excellent because of the priority given to student wellbeing in all aspects of their stay. Students are consistently well informed and carefully advised, both in their study programme, notably through the tutorial system, and also in their social life, with great care provided to ensure that they remain safe and secure through the provision of guidelines, important contact information and personal attention.



12	External Communications
	12.1 is excellent because the dedication and research into client patterns carried out by the sales and marketing team has already resulted in an increase in direct recruitment and has raised the profile of the LEC. The current upgrading of the website will continue to contribute to this.



Summary of recommendations

1	<p>Management and Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat the prospective appointment of an academic manager as a priority in order that the appointed post-holder be part of the decision-making team for strategic management as soon as possible.• Review the content and format of all job descriptions within the LEC. (See also Section 11).• Monitor the current status of the Cert TESOL training course and delete reference from website if the course is not resumed.
2	<p>Teaching and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set up group tasks with a more consistently defined and focused intended outcome which can be fully linguistically realised during the feedback phase.• Ensure that the understanding of task instructions and language explanations are consistently checked in order that students are fully aware of both task directives and linguistic concepts throughout the lesson.• Establish a greater degree of consistency in the means of identification and presentation of desired outcomes for each individual lesson as well as sequence of lessons from each teacher.
3	<p>Course Design and Supporting Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make every effort to appoint a suitable academic manager within a short time frame and preferable no later than the end of May, which will enable Inspectors on the follow-up visit for Young Learners and Cert TESOL course (if running) to discuss the development of the role.• Revisit the main syllabus document with the aim of allowing it to more effectively underpin the LEC's educational rationale, to refer more specifically to the CEFR descriptors and can-do statements and to make it more accessible as a starting point for teachers to develop their schemes of work.• Develop the format of the Schemes of Work to reflect and refer more clearly and directly to the CEFR level descriptors, both global and specific and to place a greater emphasis on interactional and transactional language alongside the current focus on language systems.• Consider the benefits of introducing an EAP course offer to prospective students wishing to progress to higher education.• Correct typographical, grammatical and punctuation errors in the current syllabus document as amendments are carried out.
4	<p>Assessment and Certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the content and procedures for developing and monitoring the content of weekly and exit assessment tasks in order to achieve a greater degree of consistency of level across different classes within the same level. Take into account some of the points made above.• Review the content of the online placement test to ensure there is not more than one possible answer to each question.• Create a system which ensures that all intended learning outcomes are assessed by the end of a course with a suitable table or checklist in order to reduce the possibility of omission of key outcomes and to reduce over-reliance on course books to provide assessment items.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw up a series of test specifications for test writers to follow in order to facilitate a greater degree of consistency regarding level and test type.• Refer to support materials and assessment rationale available offered on the Eequals website to assist staff in the production of assessment items; identify a member of staff to oversee the area in order to develop competence in the writing of assessment items.• .
5	Academic Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and develop the provision of commercially produced supplementary materials when finances permit.• Review and develop the database of materials produced in-house which can be easily accessed by teachers. Embark on a project, the aim of which would be to extend and expand the database of materials produced in-house for use in courses as a supplement to the main course books.• Initiate a programme of replacement of IWBs, beginning with those that are becoming less reliable.
7	Client Services <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the social programme content and format so that it may attract a higher number of students.• Initiate a regular programme of visits to homestay providers from representatives of the LEC.
8	Quality Assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct an overview of quality assurance processes and procedures to analyse how quality issues are evaluated, reflected upon and acted upon in every aspect of the operation.• Review the approach to the collecting of feedback, from students and other stakeholders and investigate ways of improving the scope, frequency, statistical analysis, presentation of results and resultant action.
9	Staff Profile and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that any delays in the performance reviews for teaching staff are remedied immediately.• Make it a priority for the incoming Director of Studies, when appointed, to review performance review procedure.• Develop the continuous development programme for teachers and establish clear guidelines as to the level of obligation for attendance.• With regard to teacher development, encourage teachers to consult and learn from the European Profiling Grid on the Eequals website as part of their longer-term development and also to access the Eequals Framework for Language Teacher Training and Development.• Enable selected teachers to attend training courses or add-on courses for the teaching of Young Learners or their online equivalent.• Invite a member of staff to attend conferences such as those held by Eequals, IATEFL or the British Council, with the undertaking to feed back to the staff on return.
10	Staff Employment Terms <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider ways of maintaining a committed teaching staff and increasing job security by creating a core team of teachers through the awarding of more permanent contracts.
11	Internal Communications



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that the LEC's organisational chart is maintained up-to-date and produce a temporary version or addendum to the chart when circumstances arise.• Review the format and content of job descriptions to reduce the number of discrete bullet points describing individual duties. Replace this format by providing a more general description of wider areas of responsibility.• Ensure job descriptions provide an accurate account of what post-holders do by setting up a process whereby the post-holder amends his or her job description on a regular basis.• Give the Equals membership a higher and more visible status in all internal documentation and exploit its material and services available on the Equals website to a greater degree.
12	<p>External Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that the Equals logo is displayed correctly and in its revised form in all documentation and display.• Raise the prominence of Equals membership in all documentation and in promotional materials in order to foster recognition of the LEC as a LEC of high quality.• Develop a culture of frequent and considered communication with Equals and fellow members in order to benefit from the mutual benefits this might bring.

We confirm that this report is based on evidence found at the time of the Inspection and that our opinion is based on our professional judgement.

DATE 5 January 2018

Signed
(Reporting Inspector)

Sue Hackett

Signed
(Co-Inspector)

Ludka Kotarska
Director of Accreditation