



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

(Tier 4) Educational Oversight  
Inspection

International House Belfast

Report of an Inspection  
December 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## Quantitative terms used by the ETI

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

## Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on achievement and standards, on provision for learning, and on leadership and management:

Performance level
Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

## Overall effectiveness outcome

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

Overall effectiveness outcome - Full Educational Oversight inspection
The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The inspection confirms that it meets the requirements for Educational Oversight. The ETI will continue to monitor the organisation's progress in addressing any area(s) for improvement through the Annual Monitoring Review inspection processes.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the learners. The inspection confirms that it meets the requirements for Educational Oversight. The ETI will continue to monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement through the Annual Monitoring Review inspection process.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The inspection confirms that it does not meet the requirements for Educational Oversight. The organisation should refer to the Home Office Guidelines for Educational Oversight <sup>1</sup> .
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interests of all the learners. The inspection confirms that it does not meet the requirements for Educational Oversight. The organisation should refer to the Home Office Guidelines for Educational Oversight.

## Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of learners who complete their English language course, out of the number of learners enrolled at the beginning of the course.  Retention rate = Number Completed / Number Enrolled
Achievement	The percentage of learners who completed and achieved all, or partially achieved some, of the components of their English language course: Achievement Rate = (Full Achievement + Partial Achievement) / Number Completed.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sponsor-a-tier-4-student-guidance-for-educators>

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## **1. Inspection method and evidence base**

Two ETI inspectors observed 37 learners in 6 sessions. Discussions were held with the director, director of studies, tutors, and learners. Samples of the learners', and tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined; and the organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant inspection documentation were scrutinised.

A focus group meeting was carried out with a small group of learners as part of the evaluation of the arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people in International House Belfast. They reported having highly positive experiences in the organisation and felt safe, secure, and very well supported by staff.

## **2. Focus of the inspection**

The inspection focused on:

- the achievements and standards;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the quality of provision for training and learning; and
- the quality of the leadership and management of the organisation.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation and which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards* <https://www.eti.gov.uk/publications/eti-tier-4-educational-oversight-inspection-guidelines-and-self-evaluation-framework>

## **3. Context**

International House Belfast has been operating as an English language school and teacher training centre in Belfast city centre since 2007. It is accredited by the British Council, is a member of English UK, a founding member of English UK Northern Ireland and Marketing English in Ireland, and is accredited as an Investor in People organisation.

The school offers a wide range of programmes including non-examination English language courses aligned to the Common European Framework (CEF); examination courses at first, advanced and proficiency certificate levels for its own learners and end-test facilities for learners from other organisations; intensive English language courses; tailored English language courses for organisations or groups of students; executive immersion courses; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) courses for teachers; preparation courses for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examinations; and the teacher training Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). During the summer months residential programmes are also offered for young people, aged from 12 to 17, to support the development of their English language skills.

International House Belfast is an open testing centre for the University of Cambridge examination courses for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); is an IELTS testing centre; and has recently partnered with the National Computing Centre (NCC) to offer International Foundation Year Programmes from September 2017.

No learners were registered under the Home Office Tier 4 points system at the time of the inspection.

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>High level of capacity for sustained improvement</b>
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision for Learning	Very good
Leadership and Management	Very good

#### Strengths:

- the highly effective leadership and management of the organisation, at both strategic and operational levels;
- the broad curriculum offer which includes an appropriate range of enrichment activities for the learners;
- the effective and collaborative working relationships established with a range of external organisations and key stakeholders to support the continuous development of the provision;
- the good or better quality of all of the learning and teaching observed;
- the extensive arrangements in place for the care and welfare of the learners, including the highly effective personal and learning support from staff;
- the high levels of engagement by the learners, almost all of whom are progressing very well in their learning and are developing their language skills to a good or better standard;
- the very good quality of the physical resources and accommodation, including the high levels of investment in information and learning technology;
- the well-experienced and highly qualified staff who are provided with an excellent range of opportunities to undertake relevant continuing professional development;
- the positive feedback from the learners interviewed about their experiences on their learning programmes; and
- the very high outcomes across the range of programmes offered.

### **Area for improvement:**

- continue to embed and develop the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, including the clearer identification of key strengths and areas for improvement and the better inclusion of key stakeholders' feedback in the self-evaluation process, and the identification of clearer actions to promote improvement and the use of more specific targets in the quality improvement plan.

### **5. Achievements and standards**

The achievements and standards are very good.

Almost all of the learners observed are progressing well in their learning and are developing their language and oral communication skills to a good or better standard. Good feedback and support is given by the tutors to support the learners' understand of the use of language in a range of setting and contexts and to develop and refine their spoken English and pronunciation skills.

The quality of the learners' written work observed is good or better, there is evidence of independent writing and the learners observed are keen to undertake homework tasks, which are mostly completed to a good or better standard.

Outcomes, across the non-examination, examination preparation, and examination programmes offered are very high; all of the learners who remain and complete achieve at least their initial targeted outcome.

### **6. Provision for learning**

The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

The curriculum offer is broad and is designed well to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners from different backgrounds and cultures, it includes appropriate enrichment activities and an interesting and varied programme of social events. Very good opportunities are provided for the learners to progress to higher levels of learning, either during or on completion of their initial targeted programme.

An effective induction process is in place for the learners to help them settle into the school and to prepare them for their studies. Very good processes are also in place for initial and diagnostic assessment, including an end of level assessment. The processes used for tracking, monitoring, and reviewing the progress of the learners are robust and support well forward planning for learning and development. Students are kept very well-informed about their progress and what they need to do to improve further.

The overall quality of the learning and teaching observed was very good. The more effective lessons were characterised by effective planning, the use of a range of appropriate learning and teaching strategies, high levels of engagement by the learners, and the use of real life situations and scenarios related to the learners' personal experiences and backgrounds. There was good planning for differentiation and stretch and challenge for more advanced learners. In the less effective practice opportunities to reinforce the content to more fully support the development of learning were missed.

Although there were good examples of the use of information learning technology, it needs to be used more consistently and effectively to support learning and teaching, by all staff. The quality of the learning resources was mostly good, in a small number of lessons observed the content of the materials and the quality of their presentation were in need of improvement.

The quality of care and well-being is very good. International House Belfast provides an inclusive learning environment; the learners are very well supported by all staff, both in their learning and outside the learning environment. Learners staying in residential accommodation or with host families are supported well on a personal level, and good links and channels of communication have been established with parents/carers and host families to ensure the safety and welfare of the learners. Appropriate additional learning support is also in place for those learners who require it.

## **7. Leadership and management**

The quality of leadership and management, at both strategic and operational levels is very good. Management have a clear strategic vision for the ongoing development of the school and the learning provision. Effective management information systems are in place to manage the range of programmes offered, including the processes used for the enrolment and admission of the learners.

High levels of communication and engagement take place between management and staff and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and aligned to the skills, expertise, and experience of the individual staff members. Staff, at all levels, are encouraged to become actively involved in planning and decision making to further support ongoing developments and improvements in the provision and enhance the learning experiences for the learners.

Effective links and partnerships, at local, national and international level, have been established with a range of external organisations, including other English Language schools, to support programme delivery and further develop the breadth and diversity of the curriculum provision.

Staff are very experienced in the delivery of English language programmes, are highly-qualified, and are provided with excellent opportunities to undertake relevant continuing professional development. Staffing levels are good, and management report that staff turnover is very low.

The quality of the accommodation and physical resources is very good. Over the past two years there has been a high level of investment in the use of information and learning technology, including mobile devices, to support learning and teaching.

While self-evaluation and quality improvement planning have improved, there is a need to continue to embed and develop the processes used including the clearer identification of key strengths and areas for improvement and the better inclusion of key stakeholders' feedback in the self-evaluation process, and the identification of clearer actions to promote improvement and the use of more specific targets in the quality improvement plan.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, International House Belfast has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and adults at risk.

## **8. Overall Effectiveness**

International House Belfast has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The inspection confirms that it meets the requirements for Educational Oversight. The ETI will continue to monitor the organisation's progress in addressing any areas for improvement through the Annual Monitoring Review inspection processes.



### Current registrations by programme during the inspection

Qualification (in-house cert)	Number enrolled
General English	30
English Intensive	6
<b>External Examination</b>	
Cambridge ESOL	8

### Total Number of learners enrolled over the past three years<sup>2</sup>

Learners	2014	2015	2016
Learners registered under the Home Office Tier 4 points system	0	1	0
EU Learners	659	660	623
Non-EU Learners (Excl. Tier 4 learners)	89	99	36
Other (Excl. Tier 4 learners)	0	0	0
Total	748	760	659

### Overall summary table of performance (over the past 4 years)

Qualification (in-house cert)	Number enrolled	Retention %	Achievement (incl. partial) %
General English (20 hour)	2318	100	100
General English Beginner	33	100	100
English Intensive (25 hour)	63	100	100
English plus 1:1	104	100	100
Executive Immersion	5	100	100
Private 2:1	8	100	100
Private 1:1	52	100	100
Work Placement	49	100	100
IELTS preparation	127	100	100
<b>External Examination</b>			
Cambridge ESOL	83	100	100

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by International House Belfast

<sup>2</sup> Year – calendar year from January to December

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