

ACCREDITATION VISIT

MAIN FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Name of Provider: Portsmouth English Language School (PELS)

Date of visit: 7-8 May 2009

Number of students enrolled on date of visit:

The provision in context

The Portsmouth English Language School (PELS) has been established for approximately seven months. PELS provides English Language tuition to international students, at present mainly from the Middle East. A significant proportion of students are sponsored in their studies by their home governments. Most aim to go to British universities on completion of their English studies. Students are currently recruited to general English as a foreign language programmes and to courses of study leading to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) qualification. All the tuition takes place at the providers' premises.

Courses are generally between 20 and 26 hours per week over five weekdays, exceeding the minimum number of contact hours specified by UKBA to qualify for a UK student visa. Eight teachers, all of whom are on short term contracts, provide the tuition. In addition, the owner of PELS employs a director to manage the programmes. Six administrative staff support the provision.

Overall judgement

Provision meets the standards required for accreditation and is recommended for approval by UKBA for a Sponsors' Licence in accordance with UKBA guidance and the Tier 4 points based system (PBS). Continued approval is subject to addressing areas for improvement identified within six months of the date of this letter unless otherwise stated.

Feedback

This feedback contains the findings from the accreditation visit brought together under the three main aspects of the Common Inspection Framework. The findings also focus on the five key questions of the Common Inspection Framework and the requirements of the student entry Points Based System (PBS) operated by United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) for private education providers.

Achievement and standards

The provision is too recently established for sufficient data to be available on success rates in examinations, and/or on progression to higher education on which to base

judgements. Early indications from IELTS results are broadly positive; the few students who have completed their programmes have broadly achieved their intended outcomes. A small number of students have received conditional offers for entry into university from September 2009. Current students are generally making satisfactory progress on IELTS and general English courses. Students demonstrate appropriate standards in their English language listening speaking reading and writing skills.

Quality of education and training

Teachers use a suitable range of teaching and learning methods. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Students' progress is monitored on a regular basis through weekly testing. Students are positive about the progress they are making and the quality of training.

School premises have recently been refurbished to a high standard. Accommodation for lessons is at least satisfactory. Classrooms are pleasantly decorated, adequately sized furnished and equipped appropriately. Students have access 10 modern networked computers with internet access in two rooms available for private study. Teachers have ready access to an appropriate range of teaching resources including books and audio visual material for use in classroom. However the range of learning resources for student use for independent study in the study room is inadequate.

Teachers generally hold an appropriate English language teaching qualification. The director holds a level 7 post graduate English language teaching qualification.

Classes are offered at different levels to meet the language needs of learners. However at present only those on IELTS programmes work towards a recognised qualification. The school is a registered centre for recognised English language qualifications, but to date no students have been entered for any of these.

The school offers a good range of additional sporting recreational and cultural activities outside class hours.

Initial assessment processes are satisfactory in ensuring students are placed on the correct level of study. Students receive good informal support from tutors, but the school recognises its formal tutorial system is not sufficiently developed. Additional advice and guidance is provided by the school's student officer who speaks fluent Arabic, as do many students.

Student accommodation is organised by the school. Systems for recording home stay accommodation for students arranged by the school are not sufficiently developed.

Leadership and management

The school is led and managed effectively. The college has a clear business plan and has conducted a detailed analysis of its activities and market position. Implementation of the business plan is at a very early stage. College publicity materials do not accurately reflect the resources currently available for teaching and learning.

Quality assurance processes are still being developed. A small number of teaching and learning observations have taken place, and there is a regular programme of staff development which is valued by staff.

Processes are in place to monitor attendance supported by clear absence notification procedures. Accurate and reliable attendance data on each student exists but is not readily available. Student progress and attendance is regularly reviewed. Measures to inform UKBA of student non-arrival or failing attendance are sound.

The college has suitable policies in place to cover the general health and safety of students. It has fully implemented minor improvements following a recent audit of the fire regulations. The college recognises there are problems in access to all parts of its premises for people with mobility difficulties and is planning to review access to teaching rooms for students with impaired mobility.

PELS' policies and procedures covering equality and diversity are not sufficiently developed. The organisation has recognised that it needs to further improve its detailed understanding of equality and diversity matters which includes the training of staff in these areas. Similarly it has recognised the need to improve its arrangement for safeguarding young people and vulnerable students.