



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

POINT BLANK MUSIC COLLEGE

Full Name of College	Point Blank Music College
Address	23-28 Penn Street, Hoxton, London, N1 5DL
Telephone Number	0207 729 4884
Email Address	info@pointblanklondon.com
Principal	Mr Rob Cowan
Proprietors	Mr Rob Cowan Mr Jules Brookes
Age Range	18+
Total Number of students	290
Numbers by age and type of study	18+: 290 FE only: 290
Inspection dates	24 - 26 January 2012

PREFACE

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

The ISI is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the UK Border Agency to inspect privately funded further education colleges in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and English language colleges.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Standards for private colleges;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations to colleges outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- 1.1 Point Blank Music College is a privately owned institution for further and higher education situated in Hoxton, North London. It was founded in 1994 with the aim of providing high quality music production education to students from around the world. Teaching commenced in 1994.
- 1.2 Point Blank is a company limited by shares. The board is made up of the directors of the company who own it. The college senior management team consists of a chief executive officer, who undertakes the role of principal, and a managing director.
- 1.3 The college offers courses leading to externally examined and recognised qualifications in music industry skills including music production, sound engineering, DJ skills, radio production, singing, song writing and music business. Students are recruited in January, April, July and October. During the summer months, the college also offers shorter week long courses aimed at the 14 to 19 age group.
- 1.4 The aim of the college is to inspire students through personalised teaching by music industry professionals working with small classes using state-of-the-art equipment. The college also seeks to provide a supportive, safe and friendly environment for students, and to work closely with the music industry to ensure the credibility and quality of the provision.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection, there were 290 students attending the college, mostly male and aged 18 years and over. The vast majority of students are from the UK or the European Union. The remaining students are from the USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa and India. English is an additional language (EAL) for a very small number of students. If applying from overseas, the college establishes if the student has the required level of English and if the statutory requirements for studying in the UK are met. No student currently has been assessed as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.6 When an individual applies to join a course, the college checks the applicant's suitability through the use of a pre-course application form and a pre-arrival interview. The college does not provide accommodation.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE

2.(a) Executive Summary

	Section of the Standards	Grade awarded 1-4
3.	The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievement	1 Exceeds expectations
4.	Students' welfare, including health and safety	1 Exceeds expectations
5.	The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	1 Exceeds expectations

- 2.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements exceeds expectations and effectively supports the college's aim to inspire its learners through high quality music education. The college offers a wide range of very high quality courses that matches the needs of its students extremely well. Students are supported by excellent teaching, and a well-developed vocational curriculum. Teachers have a flair and enthusiasm which inspires initiative and interest among the students. Students demonstrate very high levels of knowledge and understanding across the range of courses. High quality music resources are provided and are used very effectively to promote learning. This enables students to be highly creative and develop outstanding practical skills. As a result, students' attendance, achievements and progress are excellent overall. Few students withdraw from courses. Assessment of the students' work and progress is consistent and properly used to support progress. However, there is still scope for improvements in the use of diagnostic assessment to inform individual learning plans and plan for individual language support for students with EAL.
- 2.2 Standards of welfare, health and safety exceed expectations. The quality of accommodation is excellent and provides a safe and secure learning environment. Comprehensive health and safety policies are in place and risk assessments are undertaken systematically. The college maintains highly accurate admissions and attendance registers. Attendance monitoring is excellent and reporting to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) is undertaken effectively where necessary. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the students and the college's pastoral provision provides a high level of support in accordance with the college's aims. Students have an excellent attitude to their learning; they are co-operative, forge excellent relationships with their peers and teachers and work well on collaborative tasks. Students were very positive about the standard of support provided by the teachers and the college as a whole.
- 2.3 Ownership and oversight is secure, and supports the college's aims extremely well. The proprietors provide effective oversight and discharge their responsibilities well for financial planning and investment in the future. They take the welfare, health and safety of students very seriously and appropriate legal permissions are in place. Leadership and management are excellent. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and there is highly effective communication between managers and other staff. Well-defined policies are introduced at all levels, and implemented and monitored appropriately. Mechanisms to monitor quality and the tracking of student progress are excellent. Self-evaluation is well developed and uses performance data to systematically evaluate and improve performance on the different courses offered. The college successfully attracts highly experienced and professionally respected tutors and managers and staff turnover is low. Recruitment of staff is in accordance with legal requirements. The college maintains excellent

communication with students, who in pre-inspection questionnaires and interviews expressed a high level of satisfaction with the education provided.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with standards for Private Colleges

2.4 At the time of the inspection, the college met all the key standards for private further education colleges and quality is high. **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.**

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve initial assessment arrangements to ensure additional language support needs are identified and catered for throughout a student's course.

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

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

- 3.1 The assessment of students prior to, or on, arrival exceeds expectations. Detailed entry criteria are set and the college has processes in place for providing accurate and appropriate advice and guidance to prospective students. The initial and diagnostic assessment of students is appropriate. Prospective students provide copies of prior qualifications to the college, and are interviewed by senior teaching staff. English language entry levels for Tier 4 students are set above the minimum UKBA requirement. Diagnostic assessment is undertaken by tutors at the beginning of the course and takes a variety of forms. However, there is still scope for improvements in the use of diagnostic assessment to inform individual learning plans and plan for individual language support for students with EAL. Individuals' needs are reviewed well throughout the programme, shared with tutors and appropriate support is provided. The number of withdrawals or transfers between programmes is low.
- 3.2 Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meetings with students indicate satisfaction with the advice that they receive.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.3 The course provision and curriculum exceeds expectations. Students are well educated in accordance with their objectives and the college's aims. The college website and marketing materials provide accurate and detailed information about the courses on offer, so that students can make informed choices. As a result, students select courses well matched to their needs and future career or educational aspirations.
- 3.4 Programmes of study offer appropriate progression routes into employment or further study. Students are highly satisfied with the provision offered and are able to link their current studies to their future aspirations. Course reviews are undertaken on a continual basis and student feedback is sought and used effectively used to guide future course development.

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

- 3.5 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning exceeds expectations. Overall, teaching is outstanding. The students' achievements are promoted by well-informed, interesting and highly stimulating teaching. Thorough planning and excellent teaching are major factors in helping students to develop their potential, in line with the college's aims.
- 3.6 Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are highly effective at building students enthusiasm and confidence for learning. Teachers are generous with their time in and out of the classroom and have extremely good relationships with their students who feel they care for them as individuals. The best lessons are taken at a brisk pace and quickly engage students' interest and imagination. A wide range of activities and approaches stimulates their interest, enabling them to make rapid progress.
- 3.7 Teachers know their students well and readily offer individual help and support to ensure high levels of skills, knowledge and understanding are developed. Lessons

address the needs of students through tasks designed to meet their varying abilities. Teaching is well supported by a wide range of exceptionally high quality resources which are used effectively. For example, teachers make outstanding use of the extensive provision of information technology to support their teaching and to stimulate students to explore ideas and express their creativity. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject often inspires and motivates students to make greater efforts. Teachers' high expectations encourage students to persevere with learning. There is an open door policy which means students can approach their teachers easily, who provide additional support for them.

- 3.8 Robust assessment systems are in place and used consistently. Teachers use questions well to assess students' understanding and progress, and oral feedback is used effectively. The continual assessment through diligently marked work ensures students' rapid progress and high levels of attainment.

3.(d) Progress and attainment

- 3.9 The progress and attainment of the students exceeds expectations. Overall, students' progress and attainment is excellent. They are highly effective learners and display excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skill.
- 3.10 Lesson observations, scrutiny of students' marked work and conversations with students about their work indicate that they make very good progress and reach high levels of attainment. Analysis of success rates over the past three years indicate that high attainment is consistently maintained.
- 3.11 Students have high expectations of themselves and respond well to their studies. They work well independently and co-operatively in groups. Their concentration is good, and attitudes to learning are supported by hard work and a culture of respect for each other and their teachers.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises (in line with expectations of educational institutions)

- 4.1 The health, safety and security arrangements exceed expectations. The college has invested well in the premises and has ensured that it provides a very secure learning environment. Refurbishment of the highly specialised teaching areas has been carried out to an excellent standard and as a result students and staff are safe, secure and comfortable.
- 4.2 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are well organised, effective and appropriately documented. The college has appropriate procedures in place to minimise the risk from fire. Fire and safety audits, risk assessments and regular evacuations are undertaken and recorded. There are fire action notices on display throughout the premises and the fire exits are clearly signed and free of obstructions. Fire protection equipment is appropriately sited and regularly maintained.
- 4.3 Staff are aware of their responsibilities and have received appropriate health and safety training. Students receive detailed and comprehensive health, safety and security information as part of their induction. A clear disciplinary policy is in place and any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with effectively. Robust measures are in place to prevent and deal with bullying. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is excellent.
- 4.4 The college has an appropriate number of fire marshals and staff trained in first aid. First-aid kits are well maintained and appropriately positioned. There are appropriate arrangements in place for students who are unwell or injured.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.5 Arrangements for student registration and attendance recording exceed expectations. Admission procedures are detailed and properly observed. A central register is accurately maintained and individual student files contain admission details, academic records and other information, for example copies of student visas.
- 4.6 Students are registered in each lesson. Daily attendance is closely monitored and unexpected absence is followed up on the same day. Communication between administrators and academic tutors is good and effectively identifies students who are late or who fail to attend specific sessions. Such instances are rare. Students are made aware that regular absence may seriously disrupt educational progress and maybe reported to UKBA.
- 4.7 Staff fully understand the requirements and procedures of UKBA in relation to both enrolment of students on courses and their attendance. A secure system is in place to monitor attendance and is effectively used to inform UKBA of students who do not comply with attendance requirements.
- 4.8 Clear policies and procedures are in place for the collection and refund of student fees and deposits. The policy is fair and applied consistently.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.9 Pastoral support for students exceeds expectations. The welfare of students is a key strength of the college and fully supports its aspiration to establish a secure, friendly, and supportive environment. Students are carefully inducted into the college through a formal programme and are given excellent guidance by staff to ensure they make appropriate course choices.
- 4.10 Regular meetings of the senior management team monitor students' well-being. A clear system of progress reviews and attendance reports ensures that individual students' personal and academic development are reviewed.
- 4.11 The college has clear anti-bullying and behaviour policies and students are confident that any such issues are dealt with swiftly and effectively. They were not aware of any instances of bullying or harassment. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meetings with students showed overwhelmingly that students were happy in the college. Students feel that the college is providing them with a safe learning experience which effectively meets their learning needs. The students are very appreciative of the efforts of the staff and feel able to approach them with any problem, confident that a solution will be found. Relationships between students and staff, and amongst students themselves, are excellent.
- 4.12 Effective careers advice ensures that students are well prepared for further study choices and life beyond college.

4.(d) Child protection

- 4.13 The safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 are robust and have regard to official guidance. There is a designated child protection officer who is appropriately trained. All staff are subject to CRB checks prior to or on appointment, and records are maintained centrally by the college manager.
- 4.14 A range of suitable policies are in place and these are effectively implemented. Staff are made aware of safeguarding issues through appropriate training.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight exceed expectations. The proprietors exercise effective oversight, successfully discharge their responsibilities and fully support the aims of the college. The proprietors bring to the college much educational expertise and ensure that all appropriate legal permissions are in place. Policies and procedures in relation to welfare, health and safety are monitored well. The proprietors meet their statutory duties for students under the age of 18.
- 5.2 Proprietors have a clear strategic vision, and have identified priorities and targets to guide the college's future development. Their oversight of financial matters and the deployment of human and material resources are excellent. They carry out rigorous evaluation of the success of the college in financial and educational terms, and, through their senior manager roles, engage in vigorous and constructively critical reviews of existing activities and new initiatives.
- 5.3 Responsibility for admissions, curriculum planning and student support is delegated and monitored effectively. The college's work is supported financially by good structures. The college building is maintained well.
- 5.4 Budget planning is linked clearly to the criteria set out in the college business plan. Student numbers, the requirements of the curriculum, and staffing are regularly reviewed to ensure financial stability. Oversight of the college development plan is based on secure self-evaluation.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.5 Management structures and responsibilities exceed expectations. Overall, the quality of leadership and management in the college is excellent. The college is clear in its objective to secure a college for students who are keen to develop and promote their music skills, both within their courses and among the music community at large. The consequent energy is directed purposefully and strongly, so that the college community is dynamic, enthusiastic and purposeful across the full range of activities.
- 5.6 Managers work extremely well together, providing strong and highly effective leadership. They are effective in promoting a clear vision of the college's identity and purpose, and work positively to sustain the extremely high standards reached by the students. Staff at all levels share the college's commitment to academic excellence and to developing a strong spirit of enquiry and independence in the students.
- 5.7 The management structure is effective in facilitating systems to initiate and implement policies to meet the college's needs, and to monitor their operation. The structure operates smoothly and successfully, with defined roles and responsibilities and excellent lines of communication. The open style of management has ensured that relationships between the leadership team and the teaching staff are good. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meetings with staff show that they are happy and very supportive of the college.

- 5.8 The managing of pastoral and academic matters is effective, contributing much to students' personal development and to meeting the college's aim to create a supportive environment. Assessment and curriculum planning is excellent.
- 5.9 Self-assessment is good and effectively evaluates the performance of the college and accurately plans for improvement.
- 5.10 The college is highly successful in securing well-qualified staff. A system of staff review is in place and used well. A programme of staff development is in place to ensure that staff are appropriately trained for their roles.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.11 Quality assurance arrangements exceed expectations. Arrangements for quality assurance are well structured and are monitored effectively by managers. Data on performance and progress is used to track and evaluate performance; with appropriate actions initiated in a timely manner to bring about effective change. The college makes improvements as a result of student feedback and course reviews.
- 5.12 Responses to pre-inspection questionnaires and meetings with students indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the college.
- 5.13 There is a suitable complaints policy in place which is operated effectively. Students confirmed that they were aware of the complaints policy.

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

- 5.14 Staff recruitment arrangements are effective and meet expectations. The college secures well-qualified staff who contribute much to the success of the college's aim of providing a friendly and supportive environment.
- 5.15 Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff are robust and records are carefully maintained and regularly updated. All staff are subject to identity checks and enhanced CRB checks, and their qualifications and employment history are carefully scrutinised. References are always taken up.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.16 The quality of information available on the college website meets expectations. Accurate details of the courses offered by the college are provided. Policies and arrangement for admissions, discipline, exclusions, health and safety as well as welfare provision are clearly detailed.
- 5.17 Contact details for the college manager, together with the college's complaints procedure, are provided. The college was responsive in providing information for the inspection in a timely manner.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Dr Nigel Chambers	Lead Inspector
Mrs Jacqueline Lawrence	Team Inspector
Mrs Sue Arnold	Team Inspector