



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

ABBAY ROAD INSTITUTE

(Company registration number – 09201312)

Full Name	Abbey Road Institute
Address	Abbey Road Institute Angel Studios 311 – 312 Upper Street London N1 2TU United Kingdom
Telephone Number	020 7266 7397
Email Address	london@abbeyroadinstitute.com
Website	www.abbeyroadinstitute.co.uk
Principal	Mr Darren Suckling
Proprietor	Mr Luca Barassi
Age Range	18+
Total number of students	54
Numbers by age and type of study	18+: 54 FE only: 54
Inspection dates	9 to 11 Jun 2026

PREFACE

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

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

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

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

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

CONTENTS

	Page
1 CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT	2
2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS	5
(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival	5
(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum	5
(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning	5
(d) Attainment and progress	6
4 STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY	7
(a) Health, safety and security of the premises	7
(b) Student registration and attendance records	7
(c) Pastoral support for students	8
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	9
(a) Ownership and oversight	9
(b) Management structures and responsibilities	9
(c) Quality assurance including student feedback	10
(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks	10
(e) Provision of information	10
6 RECOMMENDATIONS	11
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	12
7 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY CHECK	13

1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Abbey Road Institute is the trading name of Abbey Road Training Limited, a private limited company with share capital incorporated in 2014. Oversight is provided by a board of five directors.
- 1.2 The Institute is an FE learning provider of vocational music production and training in sound engineering. Associated institutions based in other countries are separately licensed educational organisations.
- 1.3 The college's Angel Studios in central London, and use of a facility at Abbey Road Studios in St John's Wood, London have some restricted accessibility due to Historic England listing, but the college makes adaptations for students where appropriate and fulfils all accessibility responsibilities.
- 1.4 The campus and admissions manager (CAM) acts as the principal and provides day-to-day management. He is supported by the programme director and a small team of staff.
- 1.5 The Institute aims to develop students as professionals with the technical skills, knowledge and expertise for a career as a music producer, sound engineer or self-producing artist to meet the needs of employment in this sector.
- 1.6 The college offers a full-time Advanced Diploma in Music Production and Sound Engineering, validated by NCFE, over 48 weeks, with enrolment windows three times a year. Applicants are assessed by a letter of application, curriculum vitae (CV) and a portfolio of four music productions they have made. If they are successful at this stage, they are invited for an online interview that includes a short performance, which can be vocal or on their chosen musical instrument. Students who successfully complete this course can progress to the second year of a small range of audio BA (Hons) programmes at the University of West London.
- 1.7 A part-time, day class for the Advanced Diploma in Audio Post-Production for Film and TV, over 22 weeks, is also available, commencing annually in November. The college also offers a 4-day Song Production Masterclass over several weekends. There is also a weekend course in Music Theory Fundamentals. These courses were not inspected during the inspection.
- 1.8 At the time of inspection 54 students were enrolled, of which 19 were on a Student visa route. Of those students not from the UK, the majority come from the USA or European countries. Approximately 80% of students are male. There are no students under the age of 18.
- 1.9 The college's last inspection was a monitoring visit on June 4 2024, where it met all standards and exceeded expectations.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. The courses meet the needs of students in enabling them to gain real-world skills for direct entry into employment in the music production industry, as well as opportunities for progression into higher education. Initial assessment of students is thorough and effective in ensuring they are well prepared for the programmes offered, which leads to high levels of subsequent employment. Teaching, learning and assessment are excellent. Teachers are very effective in ensuring that students are able to access the curriculum through well-planned teaching and use of high-quality resources. At the time of the inspection, there were no students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but the college is able to determine this during initial assessment and, where appropriate, makes adjustments in examinations and delivery. Work set in class is of a high standard and meets the needs of students, based upon their prior knowledge as well as their intended aims. This approach means that students feel very positively about the experience they receive at the college. Courses on offer to students studying under Student visa arrangements all meet the definition of an approved qualification according to Home Office guidance. British values are effectively promoted.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Both sites used for teaching provide a very well-equipped resource for study and the delivery of learning opportunities. Buildings are secure and comply with relevant health and safety legislation. The college has no catering provision centres but provides break-out areas for students to use. Measures to reduce the risk of fire are effective, and a suitable first aid policy is implemented well. Attendance rates are excellent. The college follows up all non-attendance robustly. All monitoring and attendance procedures meet Home Office reporting requirements. Pastoral care is excellent and students are well supported by staff.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The proprietor takes their responsibilities seriously and discharges them well. Processes to recruit staff are excellent. The proprietor has all necessary legal permissions and fulfils all duties with regard to health and safety. The college's aims are well met through effective strategic planning and quality assurance, by leaders, of all activity. Leaders and proprietors have well-developed systems to identify and then act on any areas for improvement. Strategic direction for the college is clearly outlined in ongoing reviews of delivery, including feedback from students and industry links. This is used by the proprietor and senior leaders to ensure all teaching meets the needs of both students and industry, as well as ensuring financial sustainability. Mechanisms for monitoring and improving educational standards, including student feedback and complaints handling are in place and allow for improvements in student outcomes and experience. Staff are well supported by the senior leadership of the college, and there is an excellent relationship between staff and leaders within the small staff body.

Informal check-ins happen frequently, alongside more formalised appraisal and reviews. The college has an excellent range of information on its website, including all appropriate policies, for prospective students and external bodies.

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

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

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to or on arrival is excellent. Assessment information is used effectively by tutors following applications. As a result of accurate information, advice and guidance provided to prospective students, students are well prepared for study on the correct course. Students enrolling at the college are assessed prior to enrolment through a detailed and thorough process of interview and review of portfolio music and production work.
- 3.2 Pre-entry processes include a number of checks, including expectations of English proficiency. Leaders have excellent knowledge of current UKVI requirements. International recruitment includes verification of documentation such as passport and qualifications, and appropriate records are kept for future reference.
- 3.3 During the inspection, no students were identified by the college as having SEND, however procedures and appropriate support are in place should they be required.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 The college has a statement of educational purpose supported by appropriate plans or schemes of work, which leads to an appropriate learning experience for students. The courses offered are appropriate for the ages, aptitudes, and language capabilities of students. The courses offered enable all students to learn and make progress.
- 3.5 Courses on offer to students studying under Student visa arrangements meet the definition of an approved qualification according to Home Office guidance. These students study a minimum of 15 hours of daytime, weekday lessons.
- 3.6 Within the college, the primary delivery is of a music production diploma, accredited by NCFE. This course provides a detailed grounding for students in music production techniques, the music business, and studio management.
- 3.7 The majority of students complete their course, and progression rates into music production employment are high. The college keeps close links with alumni, who are often brought back to talk to current students. Several have been involved in world-class production, and these case studies are used to inspire students and provide models for career advice.

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

- 3.8 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is excellent and gives all students the opportunity to progress.
- 3.9 Teachers are well qualified and experienced in delivering music production and studio management. They all have significant industry experience, which they use effectively

to enable students to progress, and many also have teaching qualifications. Classroom activity is purposeful and covers theoretical material well, while practical technical sessions, using excellent studio facilities, enable students to learn quickly and to a high standard, promoting learning and the acquisition of skills.

- 3.10 Students and their individual needs are well understood by their teachers, who adapt lessons where required to ensure students can progress. Questioning techniques enable students to make excellent progress, especially in recording techniques and software use.
- 3.11 Students work collaboratively and enjoy their lessons. In many sessions, group work is used effectively which improves student outcomes as well as improving engagement. For example, in studio recording techniques sessions, students actively set-up amplification systems, as well as playing their own instruments to learn how different acoustic treatments affect the final recorded product.
- 3.12 Tutors maintain good relationships with students. Tutors also conduct regular learning checks in class which help students to prepare for their final examinations. The teaching does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 3.13 The teaching does not discriminate against students contrary to Part 3 of the Equality Act 2010 and encourages respect for other people, including those with the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.14 Attainment and progress are excellent.
- 3.15 The college uses a framework by which overall student performance can be evaluated by reference to norms derived from externally accredited examinations.
- 3.16 The college has a well-planned post-completion offer for students to become in-house technicians after the completion of their course. This provides opportunities for current students to gain support in their studies as well as enabling further development for the employed technicians.
- 3.17 Progress both within and between lessons is excellent, with students demonstrating rapid gains in technical knowledge across a range of software production tools and physical studio equipment.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

- 4.1 Health, safety and security of the premises are excellent.
- 4.2 All buildings are in a good state of repair and are fit for purpose. The security of all buildings is excellent. Students feel safe, and both students and staff understand potential risks relating to their particular setting.
- 4.3 The main sites used by the college have some restricted accessibility due to Historic England listing, but the college makes suitable adaptations for students, where appropriate, and fulfils all accessibility responsibilities.
- 4.4 Tidiness and hygiene are excellent, and classrooms are well furnished and resourced to a very high standard. Technical facilities for music production are excellent.
- 4.5 There are sufficient washrooms for students and staff. All furniture and fittings within the college are appropriate for the range and ages of learners, as well as for the activities undertaken.
- 4.6 Measures to reduce the risk of fire are effectively implemented including through regular fire drills and the management of fire extinguishing equipment. Exits are clearly marked and staff are suitably trained.
- 4.7 Effective arrangements are in place to assure the health and safety of students and staff. Records of any incidents are systematically kept and training for staff and students is appropriate for the provision in place, with a suitable number of staff trained in first aid. There is a first aid policy which is implemented effectively.
- 4.8 Free drinking water is available.
- 4.9 The main teaching site, as well as the Abbey Road site, are both used commercially. The college uses the commercial aspects effectively to enrich students' learning when available. Appropriate measures are in place so that neither teaching nor commercial activity are disrupted.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.10 Student admission, registration and attendance records are excellent, and attendance is high. Confirmation of acceptance of studies (CAS) and visa compliance checks are all in place using a centralised system and online records.
- 4.11 The college has very clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees. These are outlined on the website prior to enrolment and reinforced during the process of interview and enrolment.

- 4.12 The college stresses the importance of high attendance and the attendance policies in place are rigorous and applied thoroughly. Staff and students understand key thresholds for attendance that must be met.
- 4.13 Where attendance falls below key thresholds, the college works with students to provide support where appropriate and provides very clear guidance on the need to attend. This, combined with rigorous entry and enrolment processes, results in very low dropout rates.
- 4.14 Where student attendance falls below that required by UKVI the college has effective communication with UKVI to withdraw sponsorship, when required. These records meet all requirements.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.15 Pastoral and personal support for students is excellent. Students are well cared for by staff who act as educational mentors as well as industry contacts.
- 4.16 Leaders are aware of the needs of individual students, as well as where students may become vulnerable. Leaders have appropriate links with local adult safeguarding boards.
- 4.17 Teachers are mindful of the diversity of their students. Although the majority of students and staff are male, there are specific female staff who students can go to if they feel more comfortable with this.
- 4.18 Behaviour in classes and around the site is of a very high standard. Students are expected to act with professionalism from their first day, and this includes behaviours around attendance and demeanour. This creates a very purposeful atmosphere where standards are high.
- 4.19 The college uses its central location in London well to provide a range of social and additional activities that enrich the learning experience for students. These are mostly related to music, but the college also facilitates other activities in response to student feedback, such as playing football.
- 4.20 Most students plan to go straight into the music industry on completion of their course. The staff provide excellent careers guidance.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight are excellent. The proprietor understands their responsibilities and is closely involved with the running of the college. There is a detailed strategic plan which is developed through regular meetings with staff. Meetings are also regularly held with students to listen to their feedback and use this to build improvements into each programme of study. This ensures the college fulfils its stated purpose and aims.
- 5.2 The proprietor is successful in securing, supporting and developing sufficiently qualified staff and also ensuring their suitability to work with students.
- 5.3 The proprietor has all necessary legal permissions and certifications in place for the use of the buildings.
- 5.4 Financial oversight is effective and ensures continued capital investment in facilities and resources for the benefit of students.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.5 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. The centre and admission manager works effectively with the chief executive officer (CEO) to ensure both proprietorial oversight and clear strategic development. The teaching team is small and close-knit, working together effectively for the benefit of the college and its students.
- 5.6 Educational focus is clearly outlined on the website for prospective students, and reinforced during the time students spend at the college. The engagement with industry leaders and commercial operations works extremely well to bring learning to life for students.
- 5.7 Quality assurance and self-evaluation is regular and, due to the small teaching team, provides opportunities to change quickly should needs arise. Rigour is provided by termly meetings with all staff, formal feedback from students at the end of every term, and oversight by directors.
- 5.8 Managers take their responsibilities seriously and are diligent in ensuring staff training is well organised, well delivered and suitably recorded. Teaching staff have regular observations of their teaching, however feedback to teachers is limited. As the quality of teaching is high, it would be useful for leaders to support more developmental feedback to teachers.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.9 Quality assurance is excellent and leaders have adequate assurance mechanisms in place. Leaders analyse students' progress and outcomes effectively over time to ensure consistency of marking in examinations. They use this to identify areas for improvement and consistently review and amend delivery as a result. This results in good outcomes across all areas for students.
- 5.10 The college has a complaints policy which is available on the website and known to students. Fee protection and refund policies are clearly outlined alongside enrolment processes so that students understand what financial recourse is available to them in the event of non-enrolment.
- 5.11 If a complaint from, or on behalf of, a student remains unresolved after consideration by the college, there is provision for resolution of the complaint through a further process. This includes consideration by an external independent adjudicator, or a panel that includes at least two people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these people is independent of the management and running of the college.
- 5.12 Leaders gather the views of students every term using surveys, and this is used to make improvements to the curriculum, as well as to facilities. As a result, programmes continue to develop over time and students report very high levels of satisfaction with their studies.

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

- 5.13 Staff recruitment is excellent. The college takes a rigorous approach to employment history and reference checks, including following up on qualifications and industry experience, confirming the identity of staff and their right to work in the UK.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.14 Provision of information is excellent. All information required is provided as required by the Standards, and during the inspection, college leaders responded quickly to all requests made by inspectors.
- 5.15 The college has a very clear website which prospective students use to understand the courses they may wish to study. This enables students to also understand enrolment processes and prepares them well for travel to the UK if coming from overseas.
- 5.16 All policies and procedures required are easily accessible on the website, and up to date, including complaints policies and procedures.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

The college should:

- Develop the teaching observation process to include more developmental feedback for staff on areas which could improve the already excellent teaching.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, and with the proprietor, and considered a range of evidence relating to quality assurance. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mr Luke Rake	Lead Inspector
Ms Eileen O'Gara	Team Inspector

7. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

ISI has shared a summary of financial sustainability data with the Home Office.