

# **Inspection report**

Organisation name	Professional Language Solutions, London
Inspection date	22–23 November 2023

Section standards	
Management The management of the provision operates to the benefit of the students, and in accordance with the provider's stated goals, values, and publicity.	Met
Premises and resources The premises provide students and staff with a comfortable and professional environment for work and relaxation. A range of learning resources is available, appropriate to the age and needs of the students. Guidance on the use of these resources is provided for staff and students where needed.	Met
Teaching and learning The academic staff team has a professional profile (qualifications, experience and continuing professional development) appropriate to the context. Teachers receive sufficient guidance to ensure that they support students effectively in their learning. Courses are structured and managed to provide the maximum possible benefit to students. The teaching observed meets the requirements of the Scheme.	Met
Welfare and student services The provision meets the needs of the students for security, pastoral care, information and leisure activities. Students benefit from well-managed student services, including, where offered, out-of-class activities and suitable accommodation.	Met
Safeguarding under 18s There is appropriate provision for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 within the organisation and in any leisure activities or accommodation provided.	N/a

# Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation. However, evidence must be submitted within three months to demonstrate that weaknesses in W2 have been addressed. The required evidence was subsequently submitted.

# **Summary statement**

The British Council inspected and accredited Professional Language Solutions in November 2023. The Accreditation Scheme assesses the standards of management, resources and premises, teaching, welfare, and safeguarding under 18s and accredits organisations which meet the overall standard in each area inspected (see www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation for details).

This was a compliance-only inspection during which the inspectors focused only on whether inspection criteria were met or not met. Inspectors did not evaluate the extent to which requirements were exceeded and no strengths were awarded. No new summary statement has been issued; please refer to the last inspection report for any areas of strength previously awarded.

Overall, the inspection report stated that the organisation met the standards of the Scheme.

#### Introduction

Professional Language Solutions (PLS) is a training organisation whose main business is in-company training in the UK. The owners choose not to submit the in-company training for accreditation because the key corporate clients they work with have in-house rules and regulations, for example, rules concerning the presence of outsiders such as inspectors observing lessons, that clash with the requirements of a Scheme inspection. English and foreign language courses are offered at the PLS centre in London, and only these intensive English lessons are submitted for accreditation. A sister company, Language Solutions International (LSI), runs largely ESP courses for corporate and government clients abroad.

In-company provision makes up approximately 95 per cent of the company's business. The remaining five per cent of business comprises intensive courses at the London centre. Almost all of these courses are one-to-one. Courses do not have set advertised dates and are booked, for the most part, by corporate clients. All tutors are employed on a self-employed basis.

The school moved to its current premises three months ago. The week of the inspection saw the first student enrolled on an English course at the new centre. Evening classes in Spanish were also running.

This compliance-only inspection took two inspectors one and a half days. Meetings were held with the managing director/owner, the general manager, the client manager, the product /LSI academic manager, the two teachers and the student. One inspector had a remote meeting with the accommodation agency used to provide homestay accommodation, and visited one of their homestays remotely. Each of the two teachers was observed by both inspectors.

# Address of main site/head office

263-265 Battersea Park Road, London SW11 4NE

### **Description of sites visited**

The premises are located just off a main road in Battersea. Four classrooms, toilets, office and storage spaces are located on the first floor, with a further office space on the floor above. On the ground floor, beyond the reception area, one area is currently arranged as a bar/seating area, there is also a kitchen and a further large room currently used for unrelated events and activities in the evenings and at weekends. There is a disabled toilet and lift access to the teaching rooms.

Course profile	Year round		Vacation only	
	Run	Seen	Run	Seen
General ELT for adults (18+)	$\boxtimes$	$\boxtimes$		
General ELT for adults (18+) and young people (16+)				
General ELT for juniors (under 18)				
English for academic purposes (excludes IELTS preparation)				
English for specific purposes (includes English for Executives)	$\boxtimes$			
Teacher development (excludes award-bearing courses)				
ESOL skills for life/for citizenship				
Other				

### Comments

The school offers one-to-one courses of 25, 30 or 35 hours per week. These are generally very short courses which focus on business English, with elements of general language improvement. ESP courses are available on demand for individuals or closed groups in, for example, legal English, aviation English and English for the oil and gas industry. The minimum age for all courses is 18.

# Management profile

The managing director was the founder of the company over 30 years ago. The general manager oversees the day-to-day running of the centre and the academic management. She is assisted by the client manager, who has worked at PLS for over 20 years. The LSI academic manager supports the PLS general manager as needed.

# **Accommodation profile**

Students often make their own accommodation arrangements. If they should wish to stay in a homestay, the school can provide one through a non-registered agency. PLS can recommend local hotels if students require that type of accommodation. One inspector visited one homestay remotely.

### Summary of inspection findings

#### Management

The provision meets the section standard. The management of the provision operates very effectively to the benefit of the students, and in accordance with the provider's goals, values and publicity. Staff are managed well, and student administration is very efficiently handled. Information in publicity is accurate and accessible.

#### Premises and resources

The provision meets the section standard. The premises provide students and staff with a very pleasant, comfortable and professional environment for work and relaxation. A range of well-organised learning resources is available, appropriate to the interests and needs of the students. Guidance on the use of these resources is provided for staff and students where needed.

# **Teaching and learning**

The provision meets the section standard. The academic staff team has a professional profile (qualifications, experience and continuing professional development) appropriate to the courses offered. Teachers receive sufficient guidance to ensure that they support students effectively in their learning. Courses are structured and managed to provide the maximum possible benefit to students. The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme.

#### Welfare and student services

The provision meets the section standard. The school provides its students with excellent pastoral care with due regard for their health, safety and security. It can arrange comfortable homestay accommodation for students, and informs students about local leisure opportunities.

# Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance

The items sampled were satisfactory.

#### **Evidence**

# Management

Strategic and quality management	Met
M1 There is a clear statement describing the goals and values of the organisation, which is made known to all staff.	Met
M2 The management has clear objectives for the future of the organisation and has realistic plans to achieve them.	Met
M3 There is a documented and clearly understood structure for the ELT operation. There are sufficient staff to manage and deliver the provision, and to ensure continuity at all times.	Met
M4 There are effective channels of communication between all involved in the ELT operation, and between the ELT operation and any wider organisation of which it is a part.	Met
M5 The provider regularly obtains and records feedback from students on all the services offered. Feedback is circulated to relevant staff and appropriate action is taken and recorded.	Met
M6 The provider regularly seeks and records feedback from all staff on the services offered. Appropriate action is taken and recorded.	Met
M7 The provider reviews systems, processes and practices with a view to continuing improvement. Appropriate action is taken and recorded in an annual self-evaluation.	Met

#### **Comments**

There is a clear statement describing the goals and values of the organisation, and there are realistic plans in place to achieve the objectives for the future of the organisation. The structure of the organisation is generally clear with sufficient staff to manage and deliver the provision, and communication is very effective. Very thorough feedback is collected from students and actions taken are recorded. Feedback from staff is collected informally and any actions taken are noted. Systems, processes and practices are regularly reviewed, and actions taken are recorded in an annual self evaluation.

Staff management and development	Met
M8 The provider implements appropriate human resources policies, which are made known to staff.	Met
M9 The provider specifies the duties of all staff working with ELT students, and regularly reviews these.	Met
M10 There are effective procedures for the recruitment and selection of all staff.	Met
M11 There are effective induction procedures for all staff.	Met
M12 There are effective procedures for monitoring and appraising all staff, and for handling unsatisfactory performance or conduct. These procedures are made known to all staff.	Met
M13 There are effective procedures to ensure the continuing professional development of all staff to meet the needs of the individual, the students and the organisation.	Met

# Comments

Staff management systems are appropriate. Recruitment is generally well organised, and job descriptions are in place for all staff. Systems for induction and appraisal are in place, and staff receive continuing professional development support appropriate to their roles.

Student administration	Met
M14 Staff are helpful and courteous to students and their representatives, and provide satisfactory levels of customer service.	Met
M15 Students or their representatives receive sufficient information and advice on their course choices before arrival and during their stay.	Met
M16 Staff carry out enrolment, cancellation and refund procedures efficiently, fairly, and with appropriate sensitivity.	Met
M17 There are effective systems in place to maintain accurate and up-to-date records of student enrolment, payment and course details. These records are accessible at all times to authorised staff.	Met
M18 There are effective systems to maintain up-to-date and accessible records of local contact details for students, and their designated emergency contacts.	Met
M19 There is a clear and effective policy on student attendance and punctuality that is known to all staff and students and is applied consistently.	Met
M20 All staff and students are made aware of conditions and procedures under which a student may be asked to leave the course.	Met
M21 All students and, where appropriate, group leaders and parents/legal guardians, receive information in writing about how to make a complaint.	Met
0	

### Comments

Student administration is efficiently handled and there are sufficient staff to handle the workload and provide cover for each other. Records are kept up to date, and there is a clear policy and procedures for monitoring attendance. Details of emergency contacts are up-to-date and accessible.

Publicity	Met
M22 All publicity and information is accurate, and gives rise to realistic expectations about the premises, location, and the extent and availability of the services and resources.	Met
M23 All publicity and information about the provider and the services it offers is in clear, accurate and accessible English.	Met
M24 Publicity gives clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on the courses.	Met
M25 Publicity includes clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on costs.	Met
M26 Publicity or other information made available before enrolment gives an accurate description of the level of care and support given to any students under 18.	Met
M27 Publicity gives an accurate description of any accommodation offered.	Met
M28 Descriptions of staff qualifications are accurate.	Met
M29 Claims to accreditation are in line with Scheme requirements.	Met
Comments	

The main medium of publicity is the website.

Information about the provider, the new centre and services offered is realistic and presented in accurate and accessible language. Information about the courses is accurate and easily found. Descriptions of the

accommodation offered, and staff qualifications are accurate and claims to accreditation are in line with Scheme requirements.

#### **Premises and resources**

Premises and facilities	Met
P1 Premises, including any external areas, are in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration, and provide a comfortable environment for students and staff.	Met
P2 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Met
P3 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Met
P4 Free drinking water is available. A choice of appropriate food at affordable prices is available to students on site, if not available locally.	Met
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display of general information.	Met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions, and for teachers to carry out their preparation and marking.	Met
Comments	

The new premises are in a very good state of decoration and repair, and the classrooms provide a suitable study area. There are ample and comfortable spaces for relaxation, signage is adequate and facilities for display of general notices appropriate. Staff use a classroom for preparation and have lockers to store their personal

belongings. This is currently appropriate provision.

Learning resources	Met
P7 There are sufficient learning resources for the number of students enrolled, appropriate to their age and the level, length and type of courses offered.	Met
P8 There are appropriate resources for teachers, which are adequate in number, accessible, and well maintained and organised.	Met
P9 Any educational technology inside the classroom and elsewhere is well maintained with adequate technical support. Staff receive appropriate training in using the available technology to support learning.	Met
P10 Any facilities provided for additional or independent learning are appropriately equipped and organised.	N/a
P11 Students receive guidance on the use of any resources provided for independent learning.	N/a
P12 There is a policy for the continuing review and development of teaching and learning resources, and evidence of its implementation.	Met

#### Comments

There is a broad range of suitable resources available for students and for teachers. The technology in the classrooms is well maintained and support is readily available. Development of resources is ongoing based on student needs and input from staff.

# Teaching and learning

Academic staff profile	Met
T1 All academic staff have a level of education normally represented by a Level 6 qualification on the Ofqual register of regulated qualifications.	Met
T2 The teaching team has ELT/TESOL qualifications relevant to the courses they are teaching.	Met
T3 The teaching team has a range of experience, knowledge and skills appropriate to the courses offered and the needs of the learners.	Met
T4 The academic manager/academic management team has an appropriate professional profile to provide academic leadership.	Met

#### **Comments**

Teachers have appropriate qualifications and experience. Two of the three members of the academic management

team do not hold TEFLQ qualifications. Rationales were accepted for them in the context of this inspection because of their entirely relevant alternative qualifications and experience, and the support available from the TEFLQ LSI academic manager.

Academic management	Met
T5 Teachers are matched appropriately to courses.	Met
T6 There are effective procedures for the appropriate timetabling of students, teachers, courses and classrooms.	Met
T7 There are formalised arrangements, satisfactory to students and staff, for covering for absent teachers.	Met
T8 Where enrolment is continuous, explicit attention is paid to all aspects of academic management affected.	N/a
T9 There are effective arrangements, led by an academic manager, to ensure appropriate day-to-day guidance and support for all teachers.	Met
T10 There are effective arrangements for the observation and monitoring of teachers' performance by a TEFLQ academic manager.	Met
Comments	

Teachers are very well matched to courses and the requirements of the one-to-one students. Timetables are flexible in order to suit the schedules of the student and their assigned teachers. Very good cover arrangements are in place, and guidance for teachers is available as needed. Annual observations are conducted by the TEFLQ member of the team. Occasionally a freelance teacher may be observed by another member of the academic management team.

Course design and implementation	Met
T11 Course design is based on stated principles. There is a coherent and appropriate course structure described in writing for teachers' guidance.	Met
T12 Course design is regularly reviewed in light of the different and changing needs of students and feedback from teachers and students.	Met
T13 Written course outlines and intended learning outcomes, appropriate to the course length and type, are available to students.	Met
T14 Any activities additional to English classes, and which form part of the language curriculum, encourage the acquisition of language and the development of relevant language skills.	N/a
T15 Courses include study and learning strategies that support independent learning and enable students to benefit from their programmes and continue their learning after the course.	Met
T16 Courses include strategies which help students to develop their language skills outside the classroom and benefit linguistically from their stay in the UK.	Not met

# Comments

The courses are designed according to stated principles. There is good guidance for the teachers on course design and planning in their handbook, and a syllabus based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) 'can do' statements. The course outline, based on pre-course needs analysis, is discussed and agreed with the student at the start of the course and remains flexible. Teachers incorporate study and learning strategies into lessons as needed and encourage students to use their language outside the classroom. However, courses do not include strategies for helping students to develop their language skills outside the classroom and benefit linguistically from their generally very short stay in the UK, often staying in a hotel or apartment.

Learner management	Met
T17 There are effective procedures for the correct placement of students, appropriate to their level and age.	Met
T18 There are effective procedures for evaluating, monitoring and recording students' progress.	Met
T19 Students are provided with learning support and enabled to change courses or classes where necessary.	Met
T20 Where relevant, students are guided to select the examinations and examination training best suited to their needs and interests.	Met
T21 Academic reports are made available to students on request and, in the case of under 18s, to their parents/guardians.	Met

T22 Students wishing to progress to mainstream UK education have access to relevant information and advice.	N/a
Comments	

Placement procedures are thorough and there are weekly and end-of-course tasks to assess learning based on the training objectives. Every student receives a detailed report at the end of their course.

#### Classroom observation record

Number of teachers seen	2
Number of observations	4
Parts of programme(s) observed	One-to-one general English

#### **Comments**

Each teacher was observed by both inspectors.

Teaching: classroom observation	Met
T23 Teachers demonstrate sound knowledge and awareness of the use of English and the linguistic systems underlying it, and provide appropriate models of both spoken and written English.	Met
T24 The content of the lessons shows that the course objectives, the learning needs and cultural backgrounds of the students have been taken into account.	Met
T25 Lessons lead to relevant learning outcomes, made known to students and achieved through a coherent sequence of activities.	Met
T26 Teaching techniques are appropriate to the focus of the lesson and to the needs of the group and individual learners.	Met
T27 Teachers promote learning by the effective management of the classroom environment and resources.	Met
T28 Students receive appropriate and timely feedback on their performance during the lesson.	Met
T29 Lessons include activities to evaluate whether learning is taking place.	Met
T30 Teachers demonstrate the ability to engage students and create a positive learning atmosphere.	Met

# Comments

- T23 Teachers provided accurate models of spoken and written language. Explanations of grammar and lexis were clear, and memorable examples were given.
- T24 Teachers had planned according to the specific needs of the student and requirements of the course.
- T25 Activities were well chosen and sequenced, and students were made aware of the objectives of each stage. However, the lesson outcomes were not always explicit.
- T26 A satisfactory range of appropriate one-to-one techniques was confidently used, including effective eliciting, prompting and concept checking.
- T27 The teachers managed the resources well and used the technology appropriately and confidently.
- T28 A very good range of correction techniques was observed, and appropriate positive feedback given.
- T29 Teachers were evaluating whether learning was taking place throughout the lesson.
- T30 Teachers created a very relaxed and positive learning atmosphere. The student remained engaged, interested and attentive throughout the lessons.

# **Classroom observation summary**

The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme, ranging from good to satisfactory against the criteria, with the majority of the segments observed being satisfactory. Teachers demonstrated very sound knowledge and awareness of the language. Lessons had been carefully planned with specific reference to the learner's needs and the course objectives, but outcomes were not always explicit. The techniques used were entirely appropriate for one-to-one teaching and resources were managed competently. Feedback was thorough and useful, and learning was evaluated continuously. Teachers created very positive learning atmospheres.

#### Welfare and student services

Care of students	Met
W1 Providers ensure the safety and security of students on their premises by measures appropriate to their age and background, and the location.	Met
W2 There is a comprehensive plan to respond to any emergency. This plan is known to all staff, and relevant elements are known to students.	Not met
W3 Students receive pastoral care appropriate to their age, background and circumstances. All staff and students know the name(s) of the person or people who deal with students' personal problems.	Met
W4 There are policies to promote tolerance and respect, and procedures for dealing with any abusive behaviour. All staff and students are aware of these.	Met
W5 Where relevant, students receive a 24-hour emergency contact number for the provider, in writing.	Met
W6 Students receive in advance information on the most appropriate forms of transport between the point of entry to the UK and the provider or accommodation, including approximate costs.	Met
W7 Students receive advice on relevant aspects of life in the UK.	Met
W8 Students have access to adequate health care provision.	Met
Comments	

#### Comments

The safety and security needs of students are generally well met but there is no detailed plan to respond to an emergency. Students receive a very high level of pastoral care from the client manager and their teachers. There are clear policies about tolerance and respect made known to students, as is relevant information about aspects of life in the UK and health care provision.

Met
Met

# Comments

The host inspected met all requirements. Homestays are re-inspected every two years by the agency PLS uses and both hosts and students receive appropriate information about what services are provided. Any homestay problems are dealt with promptly.

Accommodation: homestay only	
W16 Homestay hosts accommodate no more than four students at one time.	Met
W17 Homestay hosts do not accommodate more than one student with the same language, unless the students, their agents, parents or legal guardians specifically request this in writing.	Met
W18 No more than two students share the same bedroom, unless the students, their agents, parents or legal guardians specifically request this in writing.	Met
W19 English is the language of communication within the homestay home.	Met
W20 Hosts ensure that there is an adult available to receive students on first arrival.	Met
Comments	

All criteria in this subsection are fully met.

Accommodation: other	
W21 Students receive information about the implications of their living in private rented accommodation and advice in case of difficulties.	Met
W22 The provider monitors any other accommodation recommended, and booking and payment arrangements are clear.	Met
Comments	
All criteria in this subsection are fully met.	

Leisure opportunities	Met
W23 Students have appropriate information about and access to social, cultural and sporting events and activities which enhance their experience of studying in the UK.	Met
W24 The content of any leisure programme is appropriate to the age and interests of the students.	N/a
W25 Any leisure programmes are well organised and sufficiently resourced.	N/a
W26 There are effective systems to ensure the health and safety of students on all on-site and off-site activities.	Met
W27 Staff supervising sporting and leisure activities on or off-site have appropriate experience and training.	N/a

# Comments

Students are provided with information about local and metropolitan events but there is normally no formal leisure programme. A tailor-made programme can be provided if students request one, but this rarely occurs.

# Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance

D1 The organisation certifies that it operates at all times in accordance with the declarations in the *Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance*.

The Accreditation Scheme requires accredited providers to comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Providers must take steps to ensure that they are aware of, and comply with, all existing and new legal requirements.

On initial application and annual renewal of accreditation, providers are required to confirm that they are complying with all applicable laws and regulations.

Inspectors will check a random sample of items during inspection, in relation to criterion D1; if they find evidence of a breach of statutory or other legal requirements, the provider will be required to submit evidence of compliance confirmed by the appropriate regulatory body.

Any breach of the law or regulations will be viewed seriously by the Scheme and may result in the withdrawal or withholding of accreditation.

Any sustained breach of the law or regulations which an accredited provider fails upon reasonable notice to remedy will result in accreditation being withdrawn.

# Comments

D1 The items sampled were satisfactory.

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2009
Last full inspection	2017
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	2018
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	In-company English and foreign language training, dance lessons.
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Brand – Battersea Spanish is owned by Professional Language Solutions. Language Solutions International.

# **Private sector**

Date of foundation	1991
Ownership	Name of company: Professional Language Solutions Ltd Company number: 05179005
Other accreditation/inspection	N/a
Other accreditation/inspection	N/a

# **Premises profile**

Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection but not visited/observed	N/a
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of the inspection	N/a

Student profile	At inspection	In peak week: November 2023
ELT/ESOL students (eligible courses)	At inspection	In peak week
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) 18 years and over	1	1
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) aged 16–17 years	0	0
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) aged under 16	0	0
Part-time ELT aged 18 years and over	0	1
Part-time ELT aged 16–17 years	0	0
Part-time ELT aged under 16 years	0	0
Overall total ELT/ESOL students shown above	1	1
Junior programmes: advertised minimum age	0	0
Junior programmes: advertised maximum age	0	0
Junior programmes: predominant nationalities	0	0
Adult programmes: advertised minimum age	0	0
Adult programmes: typical age range	18–45	18–45
Adult programmes: typical length of stay	1 week	1 week
Adult programmes: predominant nationalities	N/a	N/a

Staff profile	At inspection	In peak week (organisation's estimate)
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	2	2
Number teaching ELT 20 hours and over a week	0	
Number teaching ELT under 20 hours a week	2	
Number of academic managers for eligible ELT courses	3	3
Number of management (non-academic) and administrative staff working on eligible ELT courses	2	
Total number of support staff	4	

# Academic manager qualifications profile

Profile at inspection	
Professional qualifications	Number of academic managers
TEFLQ qualification	1
Academic managers without TEFLQ qualification or three years relevant experience	2
Total	3
Comments	
Patignales provided. No teaching allocated to academic managers	

Rationales provided. No teaching allocated to academic managers.

**Teacher qualifications profile** 

Profile in week of inspection	
Professional qualifications	Number of teachers
TEFLQ qualification	0
TEFLI qualification	2
Holding specialist qualifications only (specify)	0
Qualified teacher status only (QTS)	0
Teachers without appropriate ELT/TESOL qualification	0
Total	2
Comments	
None.	

**Accommodation profile** 

Accommodation profile				
Number of students in each at the time of inspection (all students on eligible courses)				
Types of accommodation	Adults	Under 18s		
Arranged by provider/agency				
Homestay	0	0		
Private home	0	0		
Home tuition	0	0		
Residential	0	0		
Hotel/guesthouse	0	0		
Independent self-catering e.g. flats, bedsits, student houses	0	0		
Arranged by student/family/guardian				
Staying with own family	1	0		
Staying in privately rented rooms/flats	0	0		
Overall totals adults/under 18s	1	0		
Overall total adults + under 18s		1		