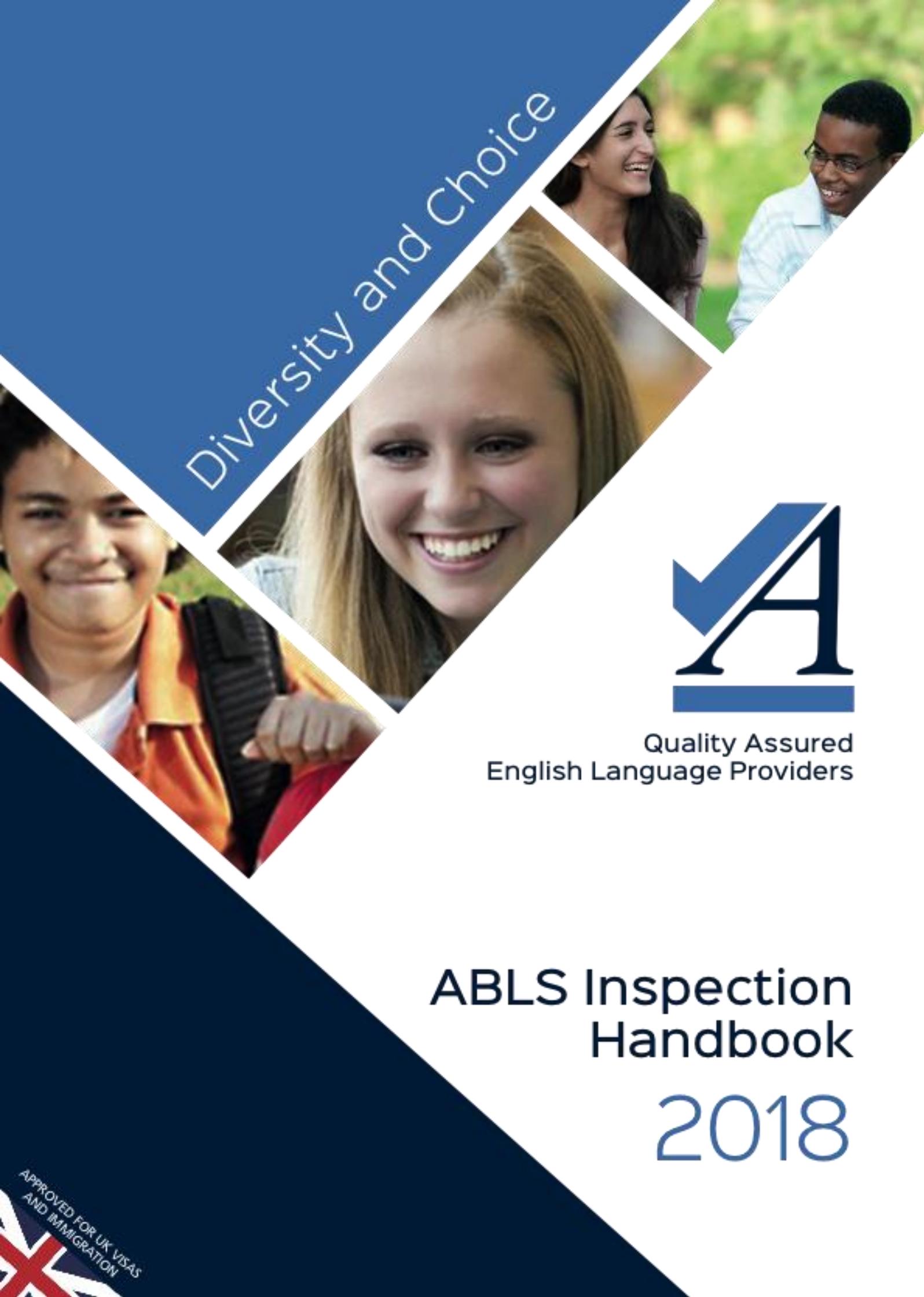


Diversity and Choice



Quality Assured
English Language Providers

ABLS Inspection Handbook 2018



APPROVED FOR UK VISAS
AND IMMIGRATION

Contents

Mission statement	3
Aims of accreditation	
Providers of Student Accommodation	
Achieving accreditation	4
Applying for inspection	5
Conduct of the inspection	7
Nature of inspection	8
The inspection outcomes	9
Maintaining accreditation	11
The ABLs Complaints Procedure	13
The ABLs Standard : Inspection Criteria	14
Appeals and Complaints	26
Terms and Conditions for Appeals	27
Appendix A : Further information for Providers of Student Accommodation	28



Accreditation Body for Language Services Ltd

PO BOX 316, Great Yarmouth NR30 9EP

t : +44 (0)1493 393471

e : admin@ablsaccreditation.co.uk

w: www.ablsaccreditation.co.uk

The Accreditation Body for Language Services

Mission Statement

ABLS recognises that English is taught in a wide variety of contexts and has always stood for diversity and choice.

As an organisation we believe that the inspection process should be constructive enabling all schools to improve and develop their English language provision.

Established in 1993, ABLS was one of the original recognised quality assurers of UK language schools and is approved by the UKVI to accredit schools planning to recruit students who need to apply for a short stay study visa. ABLS is committed to fairness and implements a policy of equal opportunities.

Our service allows all providers of private and independently run English language services equal access to an external quality assurance system which is both rigorous and fair. The service does not extend to providers in receipt of public funding.

In summary ABLS:

- believes all students should be guaranteed a safe and effective learning environment with high standards of teaching and training, as well as the requisite levels of additional and necessary support
- provides an independent inspection service which is both rigorous and fair
- constantly reviews its inspection criteria
- in addition to all year-round language schools assesses a diverse range of organisations such as those providing home-language tuition, study and cultural holidays and seasonal language programmes for students under the age of 18
- conducts initial and repeat inspections to ensure that stringent quality assurance criteria (as defined in this document) and UK legal requirements are adhered to
- operates a four-yearly inspection cycle for schools
- allocates inspectors who are independent and experienced EFL professionals
- supports and encourages the development of new and accredited schools

The aims of accreditation

Standards monitoring of language providers to ensure the standard of provision to students is satisfactory.

- Compliance monitoring to ensure that organisations are abiding by the requirements of UK law and regulations as well as by ABLS regulations and requirements.
- A demonstration of the organisation's commitment to quality assurance and to professional development in all areas.
- By definition, a mark of quality of that organisation that is universally recognised by government agencies, industry agents and the market.

Accreditation of Accommodation Providers

ABLS also offers an accreditation service for organisations providing accommodation specifically for EFL students. Providers awarded this accreditation are entitled to display an ABLS accreditation marque. The information with regard to application and process in this handbook, apart from the criteria relating to academic matters will apply.

Please note accommodation agencies should refer to Appendix A at the end of this handbook before making an application.

Full terms and conditions can be downloaded from the website.

QALEN

ABLS is a member of QALEN (Quality Assurance in Language Education Network) which provides opportunities for participants and members from Accrediting and Quality Assurance bodies in the language education sector to communicate and collaborate with the aim of developing new, innovative methods of Quality Assurance and Accreditation. Other members: NEAS (Australia), FELTOM (Malta), ACCET (USA) and ENZ (New Zealand), Languages Canada, EduSA (South Africa) and Accreditation UK. Further details at www.qalen.org.

Achieving accreditation

The award of accreditation is dependent upon an ethos of meeting standards and of being compliance aware, as well as meeting the minimum standards within each of the areas outlined on page 15.

Central to these requirements is a clear ethos of commitment to quality provision and this must be demonstrated in relation to the following:

- Management provision is organised for, and operates to, the benefit of the students.
- The learning environment is appropriate to the needs of the student and reflects a commitment to the learning activity. This includes the standard of facilities, equipment and staffing levels.
- Support to the teaching staff is professional, appropriate to the needs of that teacher and focussed on the need to provide a positive and effective learning experience for the student.
- Teachers are appropriately qualified and reveal compatibility and competence with regard to the level of the class they are teaching. This will be readily observable.
- Students are offered the opportunity and encouraged to take qualifications.
- Basic Health and Safety rules are met, guaranteeing the well-being of the students.
- Accommodation arrangements (where provided) are managed and monitored effectively.
- Pastoral and welfare provision is in place and is known to the students.
- Legal requirements have been identified and met, allowing students to have confidence in the integrity of the organisation.

Accreditation cannot be awarded if:

- Significant weaknesses appear during an inspection with regard to the areas noted above.
- Public literature/statements do not match the observations or deliberations of the visiting inspector.
- Mandatory actions from a previous inspection have not been acted upon effectively or there has not been an attempt to meet them and/or the provider has failed to inform ABLS of the progress being made in meeting recommendations within any given timeframe.
- A history of complaints/appeals against the organisation has presented itself.
- Allegations of serious misdemeanours, accountable to the organisation and/or its staff, have been investigated and upheld.
- Insufficient or unsatisfactory documentary evidence/records are kept.
- Agreement to undergo inspection within 3 months of the due date is not forthcoming from the organisation concerned (at the discretion of the Chief Inspector).
- There is evidence that a provider has acted in a manner that brings ABLS into disrepute.

It should be noted that the above applies to new and existing schools.

Applying for inspection

Consultation telephone call

ABLS encourages all providers who plan to apply for an inspection to contact the administration team by email to arrange a consultation telephone call with an advisor. This is a chance for the provider to ask specific questions with regard to the accreditation process. It is also an opportunity for the provider to be made aware of what action may need to be taken to maximise the prospects of being able to demonstrate compliance with the inspection criteria.

ABLS workshops

Workshops are available to prospective and existing ABLS schools and are usually arranged outside of the busy summer period. Topics previously covered include preparing for inspection and syllabus design. Further details of ABLS workshops are available on the website.

English language providers

Only organisations providing English language services will be considered for inspection. It is a requirement that tuition fees will be charged to the learner for all courses to be assessed. ABLS does not inspect providers receiving funding or those from within the state sector.

It would be normal for a provider to have been offering the courses to be assessed for a minimum of one year before applying for inspection. If an exception is made to this rule all conditions set by ABLS must be strictly adhered to and in the event of this not being the case accreditation can be withdrawn with immediate effect.

The decision regarding whether or not to conduct an inspection is at the discretion of the Chief Inspector. Newly established schools should email the administration office for further advice.

Scope of accreditation

When accreditation is granted, it will only relate to those premises and products assessed during the inspection.

It should be noted that where providers operate from:

- one main administration site with permanent additional centres all sites will be subject to inspection.
- one main administration site with temporary seasonal centres, these will be inspected using appropriate sampling methodologies and could be subject to additional inspections at cost to the provider during the four-yearly cycle at the discretion of the Chief Inspector

Accreditation will only be extended to the courses and services provided during inspection. Any significant changes to the course profile or range of services must be reported to ABLS and may result in a re-inspection at cost to the provider.

It should be noted that in the event of an organisation operating a school/schools in the same name in separate locations accreditation for the organisation will be withdrawn should one centre fail to retain the ABLS standard.

Inspection of accommodation

Where a school organises and/or takes payment for home-stay accommodation (defined as a place of student residence where tuition does not occur) this will also be inspected using appropriate sampling methodologies regardless of the ages of the students. If a school chooses to contract out accommodation to an organisation not accredited by ABLS appropriate sampling will also take place.

Home language tuition

Where an organisation provides home language tuition (defined as a place of student residence and formal tuition) lesson observation will occur in addition to the normal procedure for inspecting home-stay accommodation. Inspection of this provision will be conducted over a minimum of two, but usually more days. If the organisation operates throughout the UK it will usually be necessary to allocate a reporting inspector to cover one or more of

the regions. This would therefore result in the allocation of a minimum of two reporting inspectors in order to carry out rigorous sampling of the provision. The inspection of the headquarters of the operation would be led by one of these inspectors with the other acting in a supporting capacity.

In-company provision

In-company provision of language services will be inspected in the same manner as that available at the organisation's own premises.

Providers of Student Accommodation

Some schools choose to contract out to companies providing accommodation for EFL students. These companies can apply to be accredited by ABLS as Providers of Student Accommodation.

If successful at inspection the organisation is entitled to display the specific ABLS logo. Accommodation providers who also offer cultural and language courses are not eligible and should apply to be accredited as a school.

The application procedure as described in this handbook will apply. Accommodation Providers should also refer to Appendix A for additional information.

Making an application

The ABLS Administrator should be contacted and an application form (NP1A) requested. This should then be submitted with the registration/administration fees, as published on the website. This amount is non-refundable in all cases.

ABLS will check the application and contact the provider should additional information be required. In the case of a provider operating from one site it may sometimes be possible for two inspectors to conduct the inspection on one day, but it is more usual for the inspection to be conducted over two or more days. ABLS will assess the number of days that should be allocated for the inspection and contact the school in advance of raising an invoice. It is normally possible to arrange for the first inspection of a provider (the initial inspection) within six to eight weeks of receipt of a completed application.

The full amount payable for the inspection must be settled 28 days before the agreed inspection date or immediately if, for any reason, the date of an inspection is agreed less than 28 days before the agreed date.

Pre-inspection interview

A pre-inspection interview with the Chief Inspector is provided as additional support for new schools going forward to inspection. This is usually conducted by Skype and is free to all new applicants.

Re-inspection of existing accredited providers

ABLS will notify the provider within three months of the expiry date of the accreditation period that a re-inspection is required. ABLS aims to find a mutually convenient time for the inspection, giving the organisation a minimum of six weeks' notice.

Change of ownership, premises and key personnel

All providers are required to inform ABLS immediately of any change in ownership, premises, key personnel or core business. It should be noted that accreditation is not transferable and therefore cannot be extended to a business under new ownership or in new premises. In such cases ABLS will re-inspect, at the provider's cost, before accreditation is re-confirmed.

Failure to update ABLS immediately with regard to any changes as outlined above could result in suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

Conduct of the inspection

The length of the inspection is determined by the size of the school. The minimum duration of an inspection is normally two days with two inspectors. However, depending upon size, complexity or other circumstances, ABLS may, at its discretion, reduce/increase the number of inspectors/length of the inspection visit.

A minimum of three weeks prior to the inspection ABLS administration must receive the documents, materials and information listed below. All material should be sent via one Dropbox link. This information is essential to enable the inspector to get to know as much as possible about the provider before the day of the inspection and to assist in the planning of the inspection programme. Hard copies of all pre-inspection documents are also to be available at the school during the inspection visit.

Prior to the inspection the reporting inspector will contact the provider to make introductions and discuss the plan for the visit. Failure to provide information by the stated deadline may lead to a postponement or cancellation of the inspection at the provider's cost.

Schools are encouraged to include any other documents that provide an insight into the running of the organisation.

Providers of student accommodation are exempt from providing evidence under Sections 4 and 5.

The documents should, as a minimum, include:

Section 1

- A statement on premises ownership or lease
- A statement on first aid provision

Section 2

- A copy of all publicity material to include fees and website address
- A copy of the complaints procedures

Section 3

- A profile of all staff including : Name / Position / Areas of responsibility / Qualifications for teaching, academic management and welfare management roles / Experience

- All job descriptions for all roles, including welfare management roles
- All policies relating to staff employment
- A statement on DBS checks of staff and accommodation providers
- All student enrolment and administrative form proformas
- All terms and conditions for students and agents

Section 4

- A copy of syllabuses used during week of inspection
- A copy of all placement tests used
- A statement on continuous professional development opportunities
- The Policy for covering teacher absence

Section 5

- A list of students enrolled during week of inspection to include name, age, nationality, length of course, type of accommodation
- A timetable of courses during the week of inspection
- A timetable of courses on the day of inspection (including staff names and room numbers where possible). If there are any changes to this list on the day of inspection, an updated list should be given to the inspector on arrival.
- A catalogue of teaching materials

Section 6

- All welfare documentation, including a copy of the organisation's welfare policy for both adult and junior students which should include the Prevent strategy.
- A register of all accommodation including homestay names and addresses and any other types of accommodation, indicating which will be used during the week of inspection.
- Copies of any contracts for accommodation provision

Section 7

- The policy for supporting ill junior students

Nature of inspection

The reporting inspector will agree a timetable for the inspection with the provider in advance and will include the following activities:

- a meeting with the person in overall charge of the management of the organisation
- a meeting with the Academic Manager
- a meeting with the person responsible for health and safety issues
- a meeting with the person responsible for student welfare
- a meeting with a representative group of students
- a meeting with the academic staff
- a tour of the premises
- a visit to a representative selection of the accommodation
- observation of a representative selection of classes
- a final feedback meeting with the management.

Prior to inspection, the organisation should collate the following documents for assessment by the inspector/s:

- Licences e.g. ERA, CLA, NLA
- Records of fire escape practices
- Any fire authority documentation
- Planning permission (where appropriate)
- Accident / Incident Book
- Employer's Public Liability Insurance certificate
- Data Protection registration
- Evidence of the monitoring and recording student attendance
- Risk assessments for all premises and activities
- Contracts or letters of appointment for all staff
- CVs for all staff
- Evidence of qualifications for all staff (or rationales where necessary)
- Job descriptions and all handbooks and policies relating to staff
- DBS checks and related documents
- Copies of student work
- Student retention data
- Records of student attainment
- Examples of completed feedback questionnaires
- Complaints file
- Copies of syllabus and work records

- All academic management records (observations, testing, etc)
- Records of external examination results
- A directory of resources and equipment
- All lessons require lesson plans and copies of all materials provided to students to be made available for each inspector
- All accommodation records, policies and contracts
- Safeguarding record

Easy access to these documents will assist with the smooth running of the inspection and afford the inspector/s a more accurate perspective of the organisation. Other documentation and material may be offered for inspection by the organisation.

It is important to note that the inspector/s may request:

- to hold meetings with any of the organisation's staff or relevant individuals
- to see any other document or piece of information relevant to the organisation's activities
- to change the inspection timetable during the day for the purposes of efficiency and to support the inspection's validity

The inspector/s will provide an estimate of expenses in advance of the inspection. Following inspection, ABLS will invoice the provider for these expenses.

The inspection report and outcomes

Summary of reporting process

- The Reporting Inspector writes the report in conjunction with the second inspector
- The report is moderated
- The report is reviewed and signed off by the Chief Inspector
- Once completed the report could also be reviewed by a member of the Management Committee. This member will have no vested interest in the inspection result. The recommendation of the report would be considered and any subsequent feedback/request for clarification directed back to the ABLs Inspectorate. The report is then signed off on behalf of the Management Committee.
- The provider is informed of the outcome and sent a copy of the report in electronic format with a letter outlining accreditation status.

ABLS aims where possible to make the results of an inspection available to the provider concerned between 6-8 weeks after the inspection has taken place. ABLs has a policy of notifying providers of results earlier wherever possible.

Mandatory Action Points

In the event of there being mandatory action points evidence should be returned to the Administrator. The timescale with regard to mandatory evidence, as quoted on the report, must be adhered to in order for a school to stay within the accreditation process.

The evidence is sent to the Chief Inspector. Once all the evidence has been accepted the report is bound, signed and sent to the school with a covering letter.

In the case of a newly accredited provider the Administrator will forward a pro-rata invoice for accreditation fees together with an annual declaration and return to be completed and returned to the office. The provider is sent a copy of the relevant ABLs Accreditation logo to be used on all promotional material. Finally details of the provider are uploaded to the ABLs Accreditation website.

Possible outcomes

1. Accreditation is awarded with no mandatory action points. It is the experience of ABLs that it is rare for providers to achieve unequivocal accreditation.
2. Although the general provision is satisfactory the provider is not fully meeting the minimum requirements. Accreditation is, therefore, conditional and not to be confirmed until all mandatory action points have been successfully evidenced within the given timeframe.
3. Accreditation is conditional and not to be confirmed until all mandatory action points have been successfully evidenced within the given timeframe and a successful follow-up inspection has been conducted.
4. Accreditation is deferred for a minimum of 6 months to allow the provider to address all identified deficiencies and weaknesses. Guidance in the form of a list of action points is provided at the end of the report. A further full inspection needs to take place with a successful outcome.
5. Accreditation is refused when the overall general provision is not satisfactory, a significant number of the minimum requirements are not being met and it is the opinion of the inspectorate that a period of deferral would not be sufficient for the provider to reach the ABLs standard. The provider may apply to start the accreditation process again after the period of one year.

Report Summary

Following a successful inspection and the award of accreditation a summary of the inspection report will be posted on the ABLs website. The summary will include a description of the school, the overall assessment for each section of the inspection and details of points of exceptional quality and innovation.

Newly accredited Schools

If the first inspection (the initial inspection) is successful, accreditation will normally be granted for a one-year period. The provider will then be subject to a second full inspection one year later or at a time indicated by ABLs.

Ideally, inspections should take place at a time when the provider is operating at a reasonably representative level of capacity.

However, it should be noted that if a provider has undergone the initial first inspection when student numbers are low, for whatever reason, the inspectorate may instruct that a second full inspection takes place when student numbers are predicted to be higher.

All schools should note that every inspection is a full inspection, may lead to mandatory actions and require evidence to be provided. Failure to provide acceptable evidence will lead to withdrawal of accreditation.

Following the second full inspection, provided there are no mandatory action points requiring evidence of implementation, the school will normally be entered on to a four-yearly inspection cycle.

Exceptions to this can be found in the next section entitled 'Maintaining accreditation'.

Following confirmation from the ABLs Administrator that accreditation has been approved, it is a condition for the marque below to be displayed on electronic and print marketing:



Newly accredited Accommodation Providers

If the initial inspection is successful, accreditation will normally be granted for a one-year period. The provider will then be subject to a second full inspection one year later or at a time indicated by ABLs.

Following a second full inspection the provider will be placed on a two-yearly cycle.

Ideally, inspections should take place at a time when the provider is operating at a reasonably representative level of capacity.

Following confirmation from the ABLs Administrator that accreditation has been approved, it is a condition for the marque below to be displayed on electronic and print marketing:



Refer to Appendix A for further information.

Maintaining accreditation

The achievement of accreditation is an important stage in maintaining standards within the industry. However, ABLS has a duty to ensure that standards are maintained throughout the period of accreditation.

To this end, all accredited providers are required to participate in an ongoing monitoring process in order to retain their accredited status and failure to comply fully could lead to loss of accreditation.

There are four key monitoring methods:

1. Monitoring of compliance with requirements set out in inspection reports. Requirements are expressed as 'mandatory' and 'advisory' action points.

- *Mandatory action points* are concerned with issues which are central to the accreditation process and which must be addressed if the organisation is to achieve accreditation
- *Advisory action points* identify actions, which, if implemented, would enhance provision beyond the ABLS standard. They are offered for advice only and no evidence of implementation is required.

2. Interim visits: ABLS reserves the right to conduct interim inspection visits. The provider will be notified of these visits and a mutually convenient date arranged. The cost of the visit will be covered by ABLS. If, however, as a result of the visit weaknesses are identified and it is necessary to conduct a follow-up inspection this will be at cost to the provider.

The aim of these visits is to monitor that the provider is maintaining compliance with the accreditation criteria requirements. The inspection will be organised in the same manner as any other inspection except no documentary evidence need be provided prior to the inspection day. ABLS will determine the number of inspectors to be employed. The inspector/s will focus on key areas of provision but will particularly assess legal requirements, welfare and any areas of concern identified in the previous inspection. The inspector will contact the provider to agree a timetable and may need some

operational information to do so. During the inspection the inspectors may request to see documentation to assist in making an accurate assessment of the organisation.

3. Unannounced visits: ABLS reserves the right to make unannounced visits to any provider as deemed necessary. As a condition, if the visit is the result of a complaint and the complaint is upheld then the provider will be responsible for all costs of the unannounced visit and any subsequent follow-up inspection.

4. Annually the provider will need to complete and sign a Declaration of Legal Compliance and complete an Annual Return which includes data on the number of students enrolled, retention and achievement to the date of the return. This provides ABLS with up-to-date information about the organisation, its programmes, its staff and the student body. Failure to submit these two documents by the requested date may result in the suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

The Declaration of Legal Compliance requires the provider to confirm that it is complying with all current statutory and legal requirements relevant to the provision of its services and that all the requirements set out by ABLS are being met.

The Annual Return requires organisations to provide information under the following headings and specifically to highlight any changes which have occurred since the last inspection or the submission of the last return such as:

- Ownership and management
- Premises
- Staffing and all key personnel
- Programmes offered
- Student numbers including details of country of origin, age, visa status
- Student retention and progression
- Examination results
- Evidence of compliance with new or amended legislation

It is obligatory for ABLS to be notified immediately of any significant changes to the provision.

Suspension or withdrawal of accreditation

Accreditation may be suspended or withdrawn if:

- the provider fails to cooperate with an investigation regarding a complaint.
- serious complaints or appeals against the provider are upheld following investigation by ABLS.
- serious weaknesses are identified at inspection.

For example:

- where there is evidence of an accredited organisation assisting in the illegal entry of immigrants.
- where the observed teaching has fallen below the ABLS standard.
- where there is evidence that accommodation is not satisfactory and the provider refuses to take action.
- mandatory action points have not been completed by the stated deadlines or other conditions set by ABLS have not been met.
- evidence with regard to action points has not been implemented.
- promotional materials are found to be misleading.
- the Declaration of Legal Compliance and Annual Return are not completed and submitted.
- ABLS fees or any other payments due to ABLS are have not been settled
- the provider has acted in a manner which could or has brought ABLS into disrepute.

A provider will remain suspended or have accreditation withdrawn until the matter has been resolved. Immediate removal from the list of accredited providers is at the discretion of ABLS.

Accreditation under review

The accreditation status of a provider may be put under review, normally for a period of a year, as a result of serious concerns by ABLS with regard to the provider.

This review may not necessarily result from an inspection. During this time the provider will remain accredited but will be subject to an action plan with a strict time frame as instructed by the inspectorate.

If the action plan contains a spot check the school will be invoiced for this in advance of the start of the review process. Failure to comply with this plan could result in immediate withdrawal of accreditation.

ABLS reserves the right to raise an invoice for additional administration fees.

The ABLS Complaints Procedure

All accredited providers are expected to have a complaints procedure which is readily available and made known to students, staff, agents and parents. In the event that a provider's internal complaints mechanism does not provide a resolution then a complainant may invoke the ABLS complaints mechanism. All accredited providers have a duty to ensure that staff, students, agents, parents and other concerned bodies are aware of how to contact ABLS and access the complaints mechanism.

All complaints to ABLS must be received in writing in English and signed by the complainant with full contact details provided. The complaint should record whether action has already been taken directly with the provider concerned and state whether the complainant is happy for the complaint to be copied to that organisation.

It should be noted that ABLS does not receive complaints relating to issues surrounding employment.

The process for dealing with the complaint

The complaint will be recorded and referred to the Principal of the provider organisation.

The Principal will be expected to respond in writing to ABLS within 10 days. If appropriate, the Principal will further be expected to report in writing within a further 30 days as to whether subsequent action led to the resolution of the complaint.

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be passed to the Chief Inspector. The Chief Inspector will investigate and if he/she considers the complaint has been satisfactorily handled by the provider he/she may recommend that the complaint be dismissed. In this case the costs of the investigation will be met by ABLS and the decision reached final.

If, however, the Chief Inspector considers there has been unsatisfactory performance on the part of the provider he/she may recommend a full or partial re-inspection. In this case all costs are met by the provider.

If the provider is not satisfied by the resolution reached by the Chief Inspector, it may ask for the case to be reviewed by the Management Committee. The Management Committee will review the documentation and arrive at a decision which will be final.

The ABLS Standard : Inspection Criteria

There are seven sets of criteria which will be addressed during the inspection:

- (1) Organisation Requirements
- (2) Premises & Facilities
- (3) Management & Administration
- (4) Academic Management
- (5) Classroom Management & Teaching Materials
- (6) Student Welfare
- (7) Junior Welfare (relates to all students under 18)

In the following sections, information is provided regarding the aspects of provision which will be covered during the inspection and guidelines on how providers should approach the visit of the inspectors.

A list is provided at the end of each section below of the core documentary evidence that will be requested by the inspector in assessment of that section.

Further evidence may be requested by the inspector during the inspection.

In addition to providing documentary evidence of the policies and systems in existence at the organisation, the provider must also be able to demonstrate how these are utilised, implemented and disseminated to all stakeholders.

In each case the inspector will summarise the section and comment on how it relates to the ABLS standards.

Section 1 : Organisational Requirements

Standard

The organisation must demonstrate that it is meeting all statutory and legal requirements connected with the operation of its business.

Key areas of concern

These relate specifically but not exclusively to such areas as:

- Health and Safety
- Planning consent
- Security of tenure
- Prevent
- Child protection
- UKVI regulations
- Copyright regulations
- Insurance

Core documentary evidence

- Permission, property deeds, rental agreement or lease for all premises
- Certificate of employers' liability insurance
- Clear evidence of first aid procedures and practice in line with the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981
- Where appropriate, full planning consent for premises
- Compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- CLA licence and/or instructions to staff
- ERA licence and/or instructions to staff
- NLA licence and/or instructions to staff
- Registration with the Information Commissioner
- Attendance registers
- Current DBS checks for all staff who have unsupervised access to students under 18
- All necessary risk assessments for premises and operation of basic services
- Evidence of appropriate fire safety precautions including fire evacuation policy, records and publicity
- First aid certificates compliant with Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
- Accident and incident book

Assessment criteria

Company responsibilities

- (1) Premises information demonstrates continuity of provision
- (2) Employer's public liability insurance is valid and displayed
- (3) Risk assessments for building and general operation which comply with legal requirements have been prepared
- (4) An Accident / incident book is available for inspection which, in addition to meeting Health & Safety Executive requirements (RIDDOR), records all actions relating to illness and accidents taken by the organisation on and off the premises
- (5) First aid box(es) is / are provided
- (6) A current Health & Safety Law poster is displayed or pocket cards are provided for staff
- (7) There are sufficient numbers of trained first aiders to administer first aid on and off the premises
- (8) The names of first aiders and location of first aid boxes are displayed prominently on the premises
- (9) The organisation is registered for Data Protection
- (10) Evidence that portable appliance testing is current

Emergency Planning

- (1) Escape instructions are in place
- (2) Fire risk assessments have been prepared
- (3) Clear procedures for fire drills, including head-count are in place
- (4) Regular alarm tests are conducted and recorded
- (5) Regular fire drills are conducted. The frequency of fire drills takes account of the age and linguistic ability of students and the age and layout of the buildings. All fire drills and incidences, including false alarms, are recorded
- (6) There is evidence that firefighting equipment is sufficient and is regularly checked

Licences

- (1) ERA
- (2) CLA
- (3) NLA
- (4) TV

Section 2 : Premises & Facilities

Standard

The premises must provide a safe, clean and comfortable learning environment for the students. ABLS recognises that not all providers have the need for educational premises per se. However, the premises must be fit for the purpose they are being used for and must be honestly represented in marketing material.

Key areas of concern

All areas used by staff and students must be fit for purpose and accessible (e.g. heating, lighting, ventilation, décor, size). Where appropriate, spaces should be provided for students' relaxation. Food preparation areas should be hygienic. Adequate clean toilet facilities must be provided with hand-washing facilities and arrangements for sanitary waste disposal.

Teaching rooms should be reasonably soundproof and provide a satisfactory learning environment. The furniture should be adequate and suited to the purpose it serves.

All social programme activity must be operated in line with statutory requirements and best practice. In all advertising, the organisation must promote itself in an accurate manner.

Core documentary evidence

- All marketing publications and all websites
- Risk assessments for all social programme activities
- Qualifications for any specialised activity supervision

Assessment criteria

Public facilities

- (1) There is sufficient social space on the premises for students to relax between classes
- (2) There are sufficient toilet facilities for maximum provision
- (3) There is a sufficient range of toilet facilities for type(s) of provision
- (4) Sufficient sanitary waste systems are in place

Fire equipment and practice

- (1) Fire doors are in place and labelled
- (2) Fire doors are kept closed and are unobstructed
- (3) Evidence is provided that escape access from upper floors meets current fire regulations

- (4) Escape instructions are displayed in each area (including classrooms)
- (5) Main escape routes are clearly signed and are unlocked
- (6) Alarm systems are in place and maintained
- (7) Smoke alarms are fitted and tested

Decor and fixtures

- (1) Rooms are large enough to accommodate stated group sizes
- (2) Premises are in good decorative order
- (3) Classrooms are sufficiently soundproofed against external noise
- (4) Rooms are adequately heated and ventilated
- (5) Furniture used by students and teachers is fit for purpose
- (6) Classrooms are equipped with adequate whiteboard or other devices
- (7) Sufficient AV/ICT equipment is provided for each classroom
- (8) Computer and internet access is available to students in accordance with the organisation's IT policy

Activity programme

- (1) There is adequate recreation space for numbers and types of student
- (2) Risk assessments are prepared for all on-site activities and individually for each off-site activity that takes place
- (3) Procedures are in place to ensure that information / procedures arising from risk assessments are communicated to relevant staff
- (4) Suitably qualified staff are engaged to deliver the activity programme
- (5) Suitable staff / student ratios are maintained for activities

Advertising and marketing

- (1) Descriptions of premises, facilities and services in print and electronic material are accurate
- (2) A maximum number of students per class is clearly stated
- (3) Terms and conditions for students and agents are clear, comprehensive and agreed in writing by both parties
- (4) Information relating to course fees, other charges and refunds is clear and readily available
- (5) All claims of accreditation and validation are accurate

Section 3 : Management & Administration

Standard

The organisation must be managed effectively and appropriately for the type of business being conducted with due concern being paid to the rights of its staff and students and the requirements of outside agencies.

Key areas of concern

It is expected that the management team will have qualifications and experience appropriate to their function.

Comprehensive staff contracts or contracts for services must be in place for all individuals working in the organisation.

Senior managers should ensure that staff and students are aware of the organisation's Equality and Diversity Policy. Records should be kept to show that the policy has been brought to the attention of those concerned e.g. the date on which the document was issued, in which format and that the staff/student member has read it. It may, for example, form part of a code of conduct or a job description.

ABLS does not determine the content of such policies. However, it is expected that managers are familiar with UK law relating to such areas and that such policies demonstrate sensitivity to such matters.

Where possible the organisation should demonstrate commitment within their practices/provisions e.g. the provision of ramps for disabled access (where building regulations/conditions allow) or employment practices that show commitment to equal treatment of all groups – aspects which will be readily accessible at inspection.

Employers must not discriminate against an actual or potential employee on the grounds of gender, sexual Identity, marital status, disability, age, race, religious belief or trade union membership.

Section A/B of the Inspection Report Form

In advance of the inspection the organisation will have been sent Section A/B which includes questions with regard to statistics and student numbers etc.

Please note that full time students are defined as students enrolled on English courses with a minimum of 15 hours of supervised day time study per week. Students enrolled on courses with fewer hours or on evening courses are defined as part-time students.

Schools should refer to these definitions when preparing the information to be included in the section 'Academic Profile Student Body Information' (in week of inspection).

It should be noted that the section 'Courses Assessed Under ABLS Criteria' requires information about student numbers in the twelve months prior to the inspection.

Core documentary evidence

- Enrolment form
- Staff handbook
- Contracts, letters of appointment
- Code of conduct/grievance procedures/disciplinary procedures
- Equality of opportunity and diversity policy and procedures
- Policy on student absences and punctuality
- Procedures for registering, monitoring and assessing performance of all students
- Staff list with qualifications and relevant experience
- Job descriptions
- Induction policy/procedures for new teachers
- Rationales for staff without requisite qualification
- Records of staff appraisals
- Records of visa applications, visa nationals and correspondence regarding visa issues

Assessment criteria

Employment documentation (applying to all staff)

- (1) CVs are held on record
- (2) Original qualifications are seen
- (3) Copies of qualifications are signed and dated as true copies of the original and held on record
- (4) Job descriptions are in place and distributed
- (5) Copies of contracts or letters of appointment are signed, dated and held on record
- (6) Current DBS checks are conducted for all staff who have unsupervised access to students under 18 years of age
- (7) At least two written references are held on record for each staff member
- (8) Rationales acceptable to the ABLS inspection team have been submitted for any member of the teaching staff without minimum ELT qualifications

Staff rights and responsibilities documentation

- (1) Written information for staff is provided which includes a code of conduct and policies covering grievance, disciplinary action, equality and diversity
- (2) Staff demonstrate an understanding of responsibilities concerning student welfare, including safeguarding and the organisation's Prevent strategy
- (3) A regular appraisal system is in place and documented for all members of staff who have worked for the organisation for more than twelve months
- (4) The appraisal system is supported by

- (5) appropriate training
- (6) A clear management structure is maintained
- (7) The ABLS complaints procedure is made known to staff and key suppliers of services

Student administration and records

- (1) Reasonable measures are taken to ascertain identity prior to the course start with a copy of photo ID page and visa page (if necessary) of passport held on record
- (2) Full time students are enrolled on English courses of at least 15 hours' supervised daytime study per week
- (3) Written policies on attendance, punctuality and absence exist to include any regulations relating to students with visas. Policies are well-publicised to students and supported by staff
- (4) A record of actions taken in response to poor attendance and performance is maintained
- (5) Administrative systems for Short Term Student Visa applications are robust, secure and readily available for inspection
- (6) Enrolment forms, including next of kin and contact details, medical/allergy information and, for students under-18, parental permission in respect of emergency medical treatment and specific elements of the course for which permission is required, are completed and retained for all students
- (7) Accurate attendance registers exist and are retained centrally
- (8) Student records are up-to-date and retained centrally
- (9) Diagnostic/entry tests are used and results recorded
- (10) End of course attainment and/or examination results are retained centrally
- (11) An end of course certificate and/or report is issued to each student
- (12) Records of student feedback are retained and assessed
- (13) Complaints received from students, parents, guardians or agents are retained together with details of actions taken in response to them

Section 4 : Academic Management

Standard

The organisation must provide its students with real learning opportunities and have systems in place for monitoring students' learning and progress and quality assuring the performance of its teachers.

Key areas of concern

It is expected that all teaching staff will hold an ELT certificate (level 5 RQF) resulting from a course of at least one hundred contact hours and a minimum of six hours' observed teaching practice. All qualifications must be validated by a university or internationally recognised examination board.

If, in exceptional circumstances, an organisation employs teachers who do not have a TESOL/TEFL related qualification, the provider will need to submit written evidence (a rationale) to the inspector in support of the decision to employ a non-qualified member of staff. Acceptance of the rationale will be at the discretion of the inspector in line with his/her observation of teaching and learning sessions.

The Academic Manager is expected to have at least a Diploma in ELT/TESOL (level 7 RQF) and experience that would enable him or her to give good advice to new teachers and to assess their performance. The qualification must be issued by a nationally recognised validation body and include at least six hours' observed teaching practice.

Equivalent may be offered as part of a rationale which should explain how the Academic Manager's other qualifications, experience and achievements fit him/her for the academic management and leadership role he/she has within the organisation. However, any equivalent qualifications must be recognised to be the same level of study and inclusive of relevant teaching practice (e.g. PGCE in a relevant field). Qualifications lacking an integral observation module (e.g. Masters in ELT/TESOL) can be supplemented separately, but the individual must have been observed for six hours by a well-qualified ELT practitioner external to the organisation in question.

In order to maintain a high standard of teaching new teachers need to be made aware of the expectations of the organisation. A policy and set of procedures for the induction of new teachers should be in place.

In-service and external training and development are to be offered e.g. providers and their employees should keep up to date with new developments in TESOL/TEFL.

The Academic Manager must demonstrate careful monitoring of teaching quality to ensure that standards are reached and maintained. ABLS expects procedures for the observation of teaching and learning to be in place and the completion of documentation to demonstrate that these procedures have been implemented. Records of formal appraisals should be retained and be available to the inspector.

Teachers' planning must reflect the needs of the students and be based on the results of tests or questionnaires given to the students before the course commences. All such tests/questionnaires should be retained by the organisation as part of a student's record. A good record of the work and attainment of each student must be maintained so as to enable the teacher to write a meaningful report at the end of a course if requested. It is expected that students will be appraised or assessed formally at various points throughout their course of study. If the organisation administers public/external tests or examinations, policies for the administration and conduct of the tests are required.

Core documentary evidence

Course outlines/syllabuses (see note below)

- Timetables
- Evidence of teachers' planning
- Records of teacher-appraisal and evidence of professional development
- Testing procedures and documents
- Student records
- End of course report or certificate of attendance, as appropriate
- Samples of students' work
- Attendance registers
- Student feedback and questionnaire results
- Provision for learners with special needs

Assessment criteria

Student assessment and progress systems

- (1) A comprehensive pre-course testing system is in place and is applied universally
- (2) Appropriate learning outcomes are identified and documented for individual students.
- (3) An accurate and reliable student placement system is applied
- (4) A student movement policy is in place and applied universally
- (5) Records of test achievement are retained
- (6) Homework is regularly offered and assessed
- (7) External examination preparation is offered

Study Framework

- (1) A clear and practical syllabus is in place
- (2) Sufficient schemes of work are in place for all courses and classes
- (3) The syllabus includes opportunities for students to develop their learning outside the classroom
- (4) The syllabus includes opportunities to promote core British values
- (5) Samples of students' work are available for inspectors to see

Class dynamics

- (1) Teaching group sizes are suitable for courses
- (2) Group size reflects publicity
- (3) Groups sizes are suitable for the ability levels of students
- (4) Procedures for covering teacher absence are maintained

Teacher support and guidance

- (1) Effective induction procedures are in place
- (2) Clear information is provided on expected standards
- (3) Regular staff meetings are held and minutes taken
- (4) Lines of communication are effective

Staff training and development

- (1) A regular and detailed teacher monitoring system is in place and documented. This includes regular lesson observations by the Academic Manager or another member of the academic management team with an ELT qualification at an appropriate level
- (2) Sufficient CPD opportunities are provided to support and develop all teaching staff

Definition of Syllabus

An acceptable syllabus is one that identifies and details course content, demonstrates regard for students' needs, acknowledges differentiation of learning styles and includes appropriate supplementary materials and activities. A syllabus which is limited to the contents of a single coursebook is not acceptable.

Section 5 : Classroom Management & Teaching Materials

Standard

Lessons must be planned and delivered in such a way as to provide each individual student with the chance to learn in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

Key areas of concern

Thought should be given to the length of lessons. Very long periods of teaching should be avoided especially with younger students.

Teachers must plan their lessons thoroughly. Each lesson must take into account the level, ability and the mix of students.

Lessons should involve a variety of activities to keep the students' attention. This can be achieved through the use of authentic materials, audio and visual aids and, where appropriate, games.

Teachers are expected to be sympathetic and helpful and to be sensitive to the needs of the students.

Individual learning styles should be taken into account when planning lessons.

Core documentary evidence

- Individual lesson plans
- Schemes of work
- Samples of classroom materials
- Lists of physical resources
- Lists of learning and teaching resources

During inspection all teachers should prepare to provide a copy of their lesson plan, classroom materials and register for the inspector for each lesson running during inspection.

Organisations should inform teaching staff that no personal comments will be made in relation to observations made during inspection. Students should also be informed of the reason for the inspector's presence.

Assessment criteria

Lesson management

- (1) Quality lesson plans are produced for each lesson observed
- (2) Lesson plans are developed in the context of a course syllabus
- (3) Lesson lengths are appropriate for students
- (4) There is good variety in lessons
- (5) Different learning styles are considered
- (6) Order and punctuality are good
- (7) Teaching reflects what is advertised
- (8) Use of appropriate teaching aids is demonstrated
- (9) Classroom practice promotes core British values

Teaching Materials

- (1) Appropriate course materials are used for the type of student and course
- (2) In-house texts and materials are available
- (3) An up-to-date catalogue of teaching materials is maintained
- (4) Sufficient AV/ICT materials are available

The organisation must provide resources of a type, quality and quantity fit for purpose. Adequate resources are essential for efficient and effective teaching. The organisation should be clear in publicity material about who is responsible for providing any course textbooks and what happens to the books at the end of the course.

A variety of textbooks should be made available to enable teachers to choose the best source for each topic they teach. Teachers should also be encouraged to prepare and share their own teaching materials.

Teachers should have access to a wide variety of teaching aids and a list of all teaching/learning resources held by the provider should be made available.

Audiotapes, videos and DVDs are valuable teaching resources that should be readily available to teachers. A minimum of one audio device per teaching area is expected. It is good practice to provide access to computers and the internet for students.

There should be a clear policy regarding the availability of reference books and dictionaries. A well-managed library is an asset to an organisation.

Section 6 : Student Welfare

Standard

The organisation needs to show that it understands and makes provision for the special needs of students who are studying away from home in a foreign country.

Key areas of concern

The organisation must show awareness of its responsibilities in terms of caring for its students by providing access to any relevant advice and help connected to the needs and particular circumstances of its students.

Staff Training in Welfare

The inspectorate requires there to be a Strategic Lead for Welfare have undergone face-to-face external training (including Safeguarding and Prevent) for the role. The individual should be a senior member of staff. There should be a clear job description. Students should be aware of who is responsible for welfare and what they have to do in an emergency.

Schools which train additional members of staff to Safeguarding Level One (Induction / Awareness) and Prevent may choose online training.

School Welfare Policy

There should be an accurate and comprehensive statement of how the school fulfils its duty of care to students and ensures their welfare. This is a key document in a school's Prevent strategy. It should be an accurate and comprehensive statement of how the school fulfils its duty of care to students and ensures their welfare. It should contain (but not necessarily be limited to):

- A clear acknowledgement that the school retains overall responsibility for student welfare
- Details of how that responsibility is delegated to staff and host families
- Anti-bullying/Abusive behaviour policy
- IT policy
- School rules
- Attendance policy
- Emergency action plan
- Prevent Strategy policy (including risk assessment, monitoring & compliance procedures, staff training programme)

Guidance with regard to Prevent

In order to comply with Prevent, and to reflect this development in best practice in the welfare of all students studying in the UK, the ABL Standard requires schools to demonstrate the following:

1. An awareness of the risk of students being drawn into violent extremism

The risk may be very low but a school must show through its risk assessment and welfare policy that it has considered the risk and taken reasonable steps to mitigate it.

2. Strong leadership

A senior member in the organisation must be named as the Strategic Lead for Welfare with responsibility for the implementation of the organisation's Prevent strategy.

3. Staff training

All staff must complete Prevent awareness training. Free online courses are available at www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk

4. Monitoring and compliance

The school's policies, information to staff, students and host families, and its records must show how it ensures that its Prevent strategy is implemented in practice.

5. Working in partnership with other agencies eg LSCB or Police

Schools are advised to establish contact before any need to share information arises.

6. Sharing information

The school's policies and information to staff must include procedures for sharing concerns. The Strategic Lead must know when and how to share concerns with other agencies.

7. IT policy

The school must show that it has taken reasonable steps to control / monitor students and staff's access to unsuitable websites / material in the context of the level of risk it has identified.

8. Promotion of core British values

These are defined as respect for the rule of law, democracy, individual liberty and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. ABLs encourages schools to interpret the promotion of tolerance widely to include lifestyle, sexual orientation, appearance, disabilities, etc.

In addition if the school offers courses to students under the age of 18, the Welfare Policy should also include:

- the school's safeguarding policy
- the school's policy regarding parental consent
- rules given to students governing free time, curfews and supervision ratios
- what support is given to Group Leaders, particularly during off-site activities, evenings and weekends

Register of Homestay

A detailed register of home-stay accommodation must be kept. A policy and system of implementation for the selection and inspection of homestay accommodation must be in place which takes into account student concerns and welfare as the first priority.

DBS checks and Homestay

Regarding DBS checks and home-stay accommodation, the inspectorate requires at least the main host in the household to be DBS checked. It is, however, regarded as best practice for all adults in the household to be DBS checked and schools are recommended to adopt this policy with all new families. In the absence of DBS checks for all adults, a signed suitability declaration is required which covers all other regular occupants of the household aged 18 and over.

Insurance and Homestay

Home-stay hosts should ensure that they have valid insurance cover and comply with current legislation covering paying guests.

Homestay Host Agreement

There must be a clear homestay host's agreement that lays out the duties and responsibilities of the organisation and the host. Students should be given guidelines for behaviour where appropriate. It is expected that individual student preferences are taken into account in allocating accommodation.

Students' Handbook

Documentation, usually in the form of a Students' Handbook, should be provided which includes information and advice on living in the UK and local area.

Core documentary evidence

- Names, qualifications, experience, DBS disclosures, where applicable, for those responsible for pastoral care, welfare, accommodation and social programmes
- Complete record of residential accommodation
- Complete home-stay register, with those highlighted that are being used in the week of the inspection
- Accommodation record details
- Policies for selection and inspection of accommodation
- Accommodation contracts

Organisations are required to demonstrate that staff and students have been made explicitly aware of policies and procedures relating to the above and, where appropriate, how to access those procedures.

Homestay inspection

Where homestay accommodation is offered, the inspection will include visits to a random sample of homes selected by the inspector at the start of the inspection. Visits will take place during the day or early evening as required. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that inspectors can make their selection from all the hosts on their register.

Schools should reassure hosts that they are being visited - not inspected - and that the inspector will spend approximately 15 to 20 minutes in their home. The inspector should be introduced to the host by a member of the school's staff, but the inspector conducts the rest of the visit unaccompanied.

Assessment criteria

Welfare management staffing

- (1) There is a named staff member who is the strategic lead for welfare in all aspects of the organisation
- (2) The strategic lead has completed recognised face-to-face training for the role
- (3) The strategic lead demonstrates relevant experience for the role

Welfare management

- (1) Job descriptions are in place for all staff with specific responsibilities for the welfare of students
- (2) A welfare policy which reflects the organisation's commitment to protecting the welfare of all students and staff is maintained as a single written document, distributed widely and supported by staff training as required
- (3) The welfare policy is reviewed annually
- (4) A record is maintained of all welfare incidents, issues and concerns with details of actions taken, which is available for inspection
- (5) Students are given a handbook or other form of written information which includes information and advice on local, key services
- (6) All students complete an induction to the school and local area
- (7) Advice on police registration is available to all students
- (8) A complaints procedure is made explicitly known to all students
- (9) Students are made aware of the ABLs complaints procedure

Accommodation management

- (1) An accurate accommodation register for residential, homestay and home tuition accommodation exists
- (2) Records of regular accommodation inspections are maintained
- (3) A standard set of criteria is applied when assessing new accommodation
- (4) Homestay hosts are aware of their responsibilities for the welfare of students
- (5) A grievance / complaints procedure is made explicitly known to hosts and students
- (6) Homestay / home tuition codes of conduct exist and are issued to hosts and students at least annually
- (7) Procedures are in place for ensuring that hosts and students are able to voice concerns about each other

- (8) There is a clear policy in place regarding the maximum number of students accommodated in a homestay which does not compromise the host's ability to fulfil his/her responsibilities identified in criteria 7.4(8), and 7.5(9) & (10)
- (9) Guidelines are in place to ensure that the student is included as a member of the family
- (10) Students of the same mother tongue are not housed together unless requested
- (11) DBS checks are conducted for the main host in each homestay accommodation. DBS checks or suitability declarations for other adult occupants are on file
- (12) The presence of all non-student occupants and frequent/regular adult visitors is assessed
- (13) Procedures are in place for ensuring hosts comply with their legal requirement to carry out a fire risk assessment of their accommodation
- (14) Hosts have been advised to seek guidance from their insurance company with regard to hosting students

Accommodation standard

- (1) Accommodation is suitable for the age, gender and cultural background of the students
- (2) The condition, upkeep and cleanliness of the accommodation is good
- (3) Sufficient and well-maintained bathroom facilities are available
- (4) There are opportunities for private time and study
- (5) Suitable menus and quality of food are provided
- (6) The accommodation provider is aware of the ABLs complaints procedure
- (7) It is a safe environment for the age and type of student
- (8) There are appropriate smoke alarms
- (9) There is a gas certificate if required and carbon monoxide sensors are fitted

Section 7 : Junior Welfare

Where organisations work with under-18s this section will be applied to all activity.

Staff Training in Junior Welfare

If under-18s are admitted, there are more specific training requirements of the Strategic Lead for Welfare. Training should be face-to-face and meet the requirements for Designated Safeguarding Leads as detailed in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (Department of Education, 2016). Training providers sometimes refer to this as Advanced or Level 2 but organisations must satisfy themselves of the content of all training courses undertaken. Further advice may be provided by Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

There is also a need for additional trained staff to operate as Child Protection Officers, also trained to Advanced or Level 2. In small organisations, the Strategic Lead for Welfare may also operate as a Child Protection Offer.

Safeguarding

- (1) The person named as the strategic lead for welfare in the organisation is also the strategic lead for safeguarding in the organisation
- (2) This person has completed face-to-face recognised Safeguarding training at Advanced or Level 2
- (3) There is a minimum of two Child Protection Officers (CPO) who have completed face-to-face recognised Safeguarding training at Advanced or Level 2
- (4) The organisation's welfare policy encapsulates its commitment to safeguarding, describes the steps taken to ensure the safety and well-being of students under 18 and includes guidance to staff responsible for junior welfare supported by training
- (5) There is adequate supervision of juniors outside class hours including during journeys to and from school
- (6) Adequate systems are in place to guarantee junior welfare during arrival and departure transfers
- (7) The organisation's welfare record referred to in section 6.3(4) includes all safeguarding incidents, issues and concerns with details of actions taken
- (8) All junior students are given an ID card and emergency number for the organisation
- (9) Provision of care for ill students is adequate

Homestay Accommodation

- (1) Homestay hosts are aware of their responsibilities for the welfare of junior students
- (2) There is a policy on curfew times which is known to students, parents, group leaders and hosts and implemented
- (3) Students of the opposite sex are not accommodated together unless they are aged 11 or under and supervised by a group leader or parents have specifically requested that siblings are accommodated together
- (4) Adults and juniors are not accommodated together
- (5) Private fostering regulations are understood and implemented by the organisation and homestay hosts

Residential Accommodation

- (1) Students of the opposite sex are accommodated in separate buildings / areas of accommodation and are supervised in a way which ensures that their privacy and welfare is maintained
- (2) Students and staff do not share bathroom facilities
- (3) Bedtimes are appropriate to the age of students and are implemented
- (4) On-duty residential staff understand their responsibilities for overnight supervision and students know who to go to if there is a problem during the night
- (5) The organisation's policy on alcohol and drugs is made known to residential staff and students and is implemented
- (6) Fire evacuation drills from the residential accommodation are conducted

Appeals and complaints procedures

Accreditation process

Organisations are encouraged to feedback on the inspection process. This feedback helps the inspection team to develop the inspection process. It is an important aspect of training and reviewing the performance of the inspection team and provides a mechanism for the quality assurance of the service offered by ABLs.

A feedback questionnaire will be sent to providers who are encouraged to return them directly to ABLs administration following the inspection. Specific feedback on an inspection is not passed on to the inspector until after the report has been submitted. An organisation wishing to lodge a complaint regarding any aspect of the inspection process can either do so on this questionnaire or in writing to the Administrator no later than one week after the inspection date.

Accreditation outcomes

Right of Appeal

An organisation which fails its inspection has a right of appeal, but it should be noted that this process can be lengthy and incur costs to the provider. Please note that the provider will need to settle all appeal costs before the appeal can proceed.

If the provider fails to submit an appeal against an inspection outcome within the given timeframe (see First Stage below) ABLs will deem the result to have been accepted and in the event of a failed inspection of an existing provider details will be removed from the website.

During the appeals process outlined below an existing ABLs accredited provider will continue to be listed on the website. An unaccredited provider remains unaccredited.

First Stage

The provider must lodge an appeal with regard to the failed inspection in a written statement to the Administrator within two weeks of the initial inspection report being received. The statement must clearly define the grounds for the appeal. The matter will be reviewed by a member of the Management Committee who has not served within the process leading to the publication of the disputed inspection report. The reviewer will examine the written statement and the inspection report and any other material considered relevant. The provider will not be invited to attend at this stage.

The result of this stage will be forwarded in writing to the provider within 28 days of the appeal being lodged.

Second Stage

If the provider does not accept the decision at the First Stage the matter can be referred to the Appeals Panel who will examine the evidence at the earliest possible date.

Members of the Appeals Panel are normally drawn from voting members of the Management Committee. They will not have served as a reviewer or had any previous involvement with the disputed report and will have no vested interest in either the disputed inspection or subsequent result of an appeal. In order to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a fair and proper manner an external and independent chair will be appointed.

The panel is forwarded all documents relating to the appeal in advance of the hearing to be examined in advance and scrutinised at the hearing. The complainant is invited, and strongly advised, to attend the panel hearing.

Final Stage

If the provider does not accept the decision of the Appeals Panel, the matter will be put to the next meeting of the Board, normally held quarterly, whose decision will be final.

Terms and Conditions for Appeals

ABLS Administration and the provider will be notified in writing with regard to the outcome of all stages of an appeal.

If the appeal results in a partial or full inspection the investigating panel will determine the terms and the conditions to be adhered to.

It is understood that the provider has accepted all the terms of the above process when applying for inspection through ABLS Accreditation.

An existing provider when signing the Declaration of Compliance will also be confirming acceptance of these terms and will have studied the current Inspection Handbook.

ABLS will follow the published procedure and no discussion can be entered into with regard to this.

Appeal Costs

Before the appeal can be addressed the provider will be sent an invoice outlining the cost of the appeal. These costs must be settled before the appeal can proceed. As a guideline, in the event of the provider operating from one site the cost will be equivalent to the fee for a one-day inspection.

In the event of a provider operating multi-sites the fee will be equivalent to the fees for the disputed inspection.

Appeal Upheld

In the event of an appeal being upheld

- appeal costs will be returned to the provider.
- accreditation status may be immediately reinstated.
- accreditation status may be granted in line with the published possible outcomes two, three and four of an inspection.

Appeal Not Upheld

If the appeal is not upheld

- appeal costs will be retained by ABLS.

Appendix A

Accreditation of Providers of Student Accommodation

This guidance note should be read in addition to the current Inspection Handbook. It provides additional information for those organisations applying for inspection for provision of accommodation services. Unless varied here, the Inspection Handbook processes and criteria will be applied.

Eligibility of Providers

All organisations providing accommodation for EFL students may be considered for inspection with a view to accreditation. It should be noted, however, that Providers of Student Accommodation advertising additional services such as cultural and language courses are not eligible to apply. An application to be accredited as a school should be considered.

Scope of Accreditation

Accreditation will be extended to the premises inspected or to the type of accommodation sampled during inspection. Any change to the nature, scale, location or region of delivery may lead to a re-inspection.

If the initial inspection is successful, accreditation will normally be granted for a one-year period. The provider will then be subject to a second inspection one year later or at a time indicated by ABLs.

Following this point, a two-yearly inspection cycle is then implemented. ABLs reserves the right to conduct interim inspection visits at no cost to the provider.

Conduct of the Inspection

The inspection will include a visit to all administrative offices as well as a sample of all accommodation types. Inspectors will decide on a suitable sample of locations to visit in order to confirm the quality of the application of processes and to identify the overall standard of provision across the organisation.

Inspectors will meet with key staff individually to understand their roles and review standard processes.

A range of documentation and data will be reviewed. More detailed guidance in inspector practice is available in the Inspection Handbook.

Pre-Inspection Materials

Once a date for the inspection visit has been agreed the organisation is sent a check-list of the items below which need to be sent to administration as a single Dropbox link at least three weeks before the date of the inspection or as directed by ABLs.

Each document to be numbered as on the list. Hard copies of all pre-inspection documents also to be available to the inspectors during the visit.

1. A copy of publicity material including fees and website addresses
2. Any relevant brochures
3. Proformas of all forms used for accommodation bookings
4. Terms and conditions for all customers
5. All welfare documentation, including a copy of the organisation's welfare policy for both adults and juniors, which should include provision for the Prevent Strategy
6. A list of all bookings for the week of inspection, including name, age, nationality, length of booking, type and location of accommodation
7. A list of all accommodation available with addresses and dates of last usage
8. Copies of any contracts with accommodation owners
9. A copy of the complaints policy
10. A copy of the equal opportunities policy
11. Any further documents that provide an insight into the running of the organisation
12. Organogram for the organisation and a profile of all staff noting names, roles and responsibilities

In addition, the organisation will be expected to complete a self-assessment which confirms a number of basic provisions and provides the key documents which evidence that the criterion is met.

School Exemptions

Where schools apply for inspection by ABLs and solely use an ABLs-accredited provider of accommodation, the school may be exempted from those parts of the ABLs Accreditation Standard and the related sections of the report.

The related sections of the Standard, where applicable, are:

Welfare

6.4 Accommodation Management

6.5 Accommodation Standard

Junior Welfare

7.3 Homestay Accommodation

7.4 Residential Accommodation

Where schools offer additional accommodation, either directly or through a third party all sections of the Standard will be inspected. Schools will be required to inform ABLs if they change accommodation providers and this may lead to re-inspection.

Inspection Criteria for Accommodation Providers

Accommodation Providers will be inspected against an abridged set of criteria from the ABLs Standard, as indicated below.

Company Responsibilities

1.2 Company Responsibilities

1.3 Emergency Planning

Premises and Facilities

2.2 Public Facilities (selected criteria)

2.3 Fire Equipment and Practice

2.6 Advertising and Marketing (selected criteria)

Management & Administration

3.2 Organisational Management

3.3 Financial Management

3.4 Employment Documentation (selected criteria)

3.5 Staff Rights and Responsibilities Documentation

3.6 Administration and Records (selected criteria)

Welfare

6.2 Welfare Management Staffing

6.3 Welfare Management (selected criteria)

6.4 Accommodation Management

6.5 Accommodation Standard

Junior Welfare

7.2 Safeguarding (selected criteria, where under 18s are admitted)

7.3 Homestay Accommodation (where under 18s are admitted)

7.4 Residential Accommodation (where under 18s are admitted)