

Organisation name	Alba English, Edinburgh
Inspection date	6 July 2017

BACKGROUND
Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	April 2016
Last full inspection	April 2016
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	N/a
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a

Current accreditation status and reason for spot check

Current accredited status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Routine: newly accredited institution

Premises profile

Address of main site	86 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PY
Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection	Spanish Academy of Language and Translation (SALT) 12 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2DP
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of the inspection	N/a
Sites inspected	86 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PY SALT 12 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2DP

Student and staff profile

	At inspection	In peak week (July)
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	109	138
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	13	13
Typical age range	20–30 adults 14–16 juniors	20–30 adults 14–16 juniors
Typical length of stay	Variable adults 1–4 weeks juniors	Variable adults 1–4 weeks juniors
Predominant nationalities	Spanish, Italian	Spanish, Italian, Omani
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	11	11
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	4	4

INTRODUCTION

Background

Alba English was established in 2012 by the school director and was inspected and accredited in 2016 with strengths noted in the areas of academic management, course design, care of students and leisure opportunities. It offers general English to adults (16+) at six levels from elementary to advanced in the morning, small group or one-to-one provision in business English and examination preparation in the afternoon, and external examination preparation classes in the evening. Most of the students on adult courses are from the EU and are embedded in the community, many of them working locally. English for specific purposes can also be provided. In the summer, a combination course of general English and English outside the classroom is offered, as well as courses for groups or individual young learners (13–17). The adult courses are based at the main school, situated about 25 minutes' walk from the city centre and the junior courses take place in teaching premises much closer to the city centre rented from the Spanish Academy of Language and Translation (SALT). Courses for closed groups of juniors are also available at other times of the year.

Preparation

The co-inspector from the first inspection was asked to carry out the spot check and was supplied with the inspection report, a printed version of some of the school's publicity and a copy of an action plan drawn up in response to the points to be addressed listed in the report and sent to the Accreditation Unit within three months of the first inspection. The website was checked. The school was contacted to check the dates of young learners' courses and to check if the advertised young learners' course in the Scottish Highlands was running. The Scottish Highlands course had not recruited well enough to run so the spot check took place in Edinburgh only. The school director supplied a staff list, a current course list, the activities programme for young learners and revised parental consent and information documents. No date was given for the inspection visit.

Programme and persons present

The inspection took place on 6 July 2017 starting at 09.15 and finishing at 13.15. The inspector talked to the school director, the administrative assistant and some teachers at the main school; information on the database was checked, documents were scrutinised and changes and additions to the premises were seen. She inspected the premises used for the young learners' course, looked at documents, talked to teachers and observed three classes. Alba's academic manager and the proprietor of the SALT premises were both on holiday.

FINDINGS

At the time of the first inspection, the school director was a sole trader but in April 2017 a limited company was established (company number SC537084). The Accreditation Unit has been informed.

In order to allow for increased numbers of students, one large room in the main school has been partitioned to form two rooms and an extra room on the floor below has been rented. Both changes were found to be entirely satisfactory.

More teachers have been added to a well-established team and the academic profile has been improved by the addition of three TEFLQ teachers.

Three students are doing work experience as language assistants with the young learners.

A new, custom-designed database is gradually being set up and has already proved to be efficient in recording and up-dating records.

The school has been approved as a teacher training centre and will offer initial training courses from October this year.

The young learners' course in the Scottish Highlands will not be offered next year.

The teaching observed was good overall with tasks, techniques and approaches particularly appropriate for young people. Students in all three classes were fully involved and there was a clear emphasis on listening and speaking.

POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED

Points from the previous full inspection and/or subsequent spot checks or interim visits with comments (in bold) to indicate how far these have been addressed.

Management

M21 Scottish words, such as *ceilidh*, and local activities, such as *climbing Arthur's Seat*, are used without explanation.

Addressed.

All words likely to cause confusion have been removed or have been explained.

M22 Photos on the website are not captioned; this may lead to misinterpretation. The school is described as being 'open from early in the morning to late at night'; in fact it is open from 9.00 to 20.00.

Addressed.

Captions have been added to any photographs on the website that may lead to misinterpretation. The website states clearly that the school is open from 9.00 to 20.00. The general statement that the school is "open from early morning to late at night" has also been removed from the video.

M23 There is no differentiation between levels in the general English course outlines.

Addressed.

Detailed descriptions of levels are provided in the general English course outlines.

M25 Indicative costs for the social programme and the fees for examinations are not given.

Addressed.

Estimated costs are included in descriptions of social programme activities. Fees for external examinations are clearly stated on each examination page.

M28 Teachers are described as 'highly qualified'; only one of them is.

Addressed.

The description of teachers as "highly qualified" has been removed from the website.

Welfare and student services

W10 The director was not aware that fire risk assessments of all homestay accommodation should be carried out.

Addressed.

Shortly after the first inspection inspectors were sent a copy of the template of a fire risk assessment to be used with homestay providers.

W12 There were no records of fire risk assessments being checked (See W10).

Addressed.

A fire risk assessment has been carried out for all homestays and records are on the new homestay accommodation database. Fire risk assessment has been added to the homestay checklist and the homestay inspection form

Care of under 18s

C4 There are gaps in the implementation of the school's safer recruitment policy in that suitability checks had been carried out only for the two teachers teaching on the young learners' course and two of the main course teachers, who could potentially be teaching under 18 students on adult courses. Two references are not sought for all teachers and no references are sought for homestay providers.

Addressed.

All staff have been checked through Disclosure Scotland for suitability. Records were seen. Two references are recorded for all staff apart from one who is recently appointed. Names of referees for this teacher are on file but requests for references have not yet been sent. Currently, she is teaching a class of over 18s. Two references have been obtained for existing homestay hosts and the requirement for two references is made clear to prospective homestay hosts.

Other points to be addressed

Management

M1 There was no CLA notice by the equipment used for copying documents; the school should seek further advice from the relevant statutory/regulatory body.

Not yet addressed.

M3 Duties of all the staff working with ELT students are presented in a summary form on a single sheet. There are no reporting lines and the job descriptions are not dated.

Addressed.

Job descriptions have been amended to include reporting lines and dates

M5 In the human resources documentation reference is made to a level 6 qualification 'normally' being required.

Addressed.

The term "normally" has been removed from human resources documentation with a level six qualification being described as required.

M6 Copies of certificates were not dated or signed. Copies of references were not present in all cases.

Addressed.

Copies of certificates sampled were signed and dated. Records of references were seen for all but one recently appointed member of staff (see C4 above).

M13 Emergency contact details are not accessible at all times.

Addressed.

Student details, including emergency contact details, are recorded on the new database which can be accessed remotely.

M14 The attendance policy does not indicate what attendance percentage would be acceptable.

Not yet addressed.

There is a clear statement of the attendance and punctuality policy in the handbook and students are briefed on the need for consistent attendance in order to facilitate language learning achievement.

However, it was felt that it was inappropriate to state an acceptable attendance percentage for students on general English courses as enrolment is very flexible with students choosing how many and which classes to attend depending on their individual needs. Young learners are informed that they must attend all lessons and activities.

Teaching and learning

T23 Modelling sometimes distorted words that were emphasised.

T26 Opportunities to encourage pronunciation were missed.

T28 Students were sometimes praised for sentences that included uncorrected errors. There was too little correction in general and an absence of deferred correction in particular. On occasion, teachers talked too much and did not listen carefully to students.

Addressed.

Evidence was seen of CPD sessions which have been run by the academic manager dealing with the points raised above, and they have also been used as a focus for some observations.

Welfare and student services

W1 Fire evacuation drills at both sites are carried out only once per year and kitchen equipment at the main site is not regularly tested for safety.

Not addressed.

The last fire evacuation drill at the main school was carried out in September 2016. There was no evidence of a fire evacuation drill having taken place at SALT. Evidence was sent subsequent to the inspection of a fire evacuation drill carried out at SALT the day after the spot check visit. Negotiations have started with the other two users of the building which houses the main school in order to set a time for an evacuation drill but a date has not yet been agreed.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit

None.

CONCLUSIONS

Alba English has responded positively to almost all of the points to be addressed noted in the report from the first inspection. The school continues to provide sound language learning experiences for students on all courses.

RECOMMENDATION

The next inspection falls due in 2020; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Changes to summary statement

The need for improvement in publicity can now be removed.

Summary statement

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This private language school offers courses in general English for adults (16+) and for closed groups of under 18s and vacation courses for under 18s.

The inspection report noted a need for improvement in the area of publicity.

Strengths were noted in the areas of academic management, course design, care of students, and leisure opportunities.

The inspection report stated that the organisation met the standards of the Scheme.

Revised summary statement

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