

Organisation name	Burlington School of English, Cheltenham
Inspection date	9 July 2019
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: inspect new or additional premises; monitor effect of change of provision

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation. However, evidence must be submitted within three months to demonstrate that weaknesses in S4 have been addressed. A further spot check next summer should focus on points to be addressed, and the check should include a visit to the London headquarters to confirm the suitability of the provision for students aged four to six.

Changes to the summary statement

No changes need to be made to the summary statement, apart from adding the date of this inspection and updating the reference to the minimum ages.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Burlington School of English in April 2018 and July 2019. The Accreditation Scheme assesses the standards of management, resources and premises, teaching, welfare, and safeguarding under 18s and accredits organisations which meet the overall standard in each area inspected (see www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation for details).

This large private language school offers courses in general English for adults (18+), young people (16+) and under 18s (7+) and closed groups of under 18s (7+) and vacation courses for under 18s (4+).

Strengths were noted in the areas of student administration and care of students.

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

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

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	1993
Last full inspection	2018
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent supplementary check(s) (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit(s) (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

Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	58	58
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	7	7
Typical age range	10–15	7–16
Typical length of stay	2 weeks	1 week
Predominant nationalities	Italian, Chinese, Russian	Chinese
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	3	3
Total number of managers including academic	1	1

Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	4	4
Premises profile		
Address of main site	1–3 Chesilton Road, Fulham, London SW6 5AA	
Additional sites in use	Dean Close Senior School, Shelbourne Road, Cheltenham GL51 6HE	
Additional sites not in use	N/a	
Sites inspected	Dean Close Senior School	

Introduction

Background

This was a signalled spot check to inspect additional premises at a site in Cheltenham in use for the first time. It was also to obtain information about the school's newly established provision for very young students aged four to six years old at its headquarters in London.

Preparation

One inspector, who had not previously taken part in any inspections of the school, carried out the inspection at the site in Cheltenham. He took into account information the school had sent the Accreditation Unit concerning course dates, days when students would be off-site and when the provision was likely to be close to capacity. He scrutinised brochures the school had sent to the Unit, correspondence between the school and the Unit and the school's website. He did not contact the school in advance of his visit.

Programme and persons present

The inspector visited on the second day of the second week of the summer school. He arrived at 09.00 and left at 16.30. He met the centre manager, a focus group of three activity leaders, and a group leader. He also met a focus group of students and a focus group of teachers. He held a meeting with the business development manager and lettings manager from Dean Close Senior School (Dean Close). Burlington's deputy principal travelled from the London headquarters and met the inspector at 14.00, having spoken to him by phone earlier in the day. The inspector scrutinised documents and online records, saw facilities and premises the school uses, and visited residences where students were accommodated. There were no formal observations of teaching, but the inspector made brief visits to each of the three classes in operation.

The inspector subsequently spoke to the deputy principal by phone to clarify further details of provision for very young students at the London headquarters.

Findings

Provision for students aged four to six years old in London

The inspector was told that during the period from mid-June to mid-August between one and nine students aged from four to six years old were enrolled at the London school at any one time. In total there were 11 across this period. Students mainly stayed one or two weeks. All were with their parents, who were also studying in the school at the same time. The young students were taught together by a female early-years specialist. Their main break was scheduled to coincide with that of their parents, who supervised them at that point. The teacher was responsible for supervising the students during their other two break times. The school's male deputy principal and female director of studies (DoS) assisted to escort children to toilet facilities. The school did not provide accommodation or a leisure programme as the provision was exclusively for children accompanying parents.

Provision at Dean Close

Management

The following points were noted:

M3 A proactive and energetic centre manager is responsible for day-to-day management at the summer centre. However, there is no academic manager in place. The deputy principal who has oversight of academic management is not generally on-site during weekdays. The two teachers who had taught for the first week had resigned from the school, and three replacement teachers had started the week of the spot check. There are no arrangements to cover for any absences. It was planned for a fourth teacher to start the following week.

M9 The centre manager is the designated safeguarding lead for the centre. He has received training (see Safeguarding under 18s below) but the role is not included in his job description.

M10 Of those teaching during the visit, one is new to Burlington and has only one reference. The two others were previously working at the London headquarters and the inspector was told that suitable references are in place. It was not possible to sample teachers' files to verify this information.

M11 A thorough induction for activity leaders and those who taught in the first week took place the weekend before the course started. Induction for the teachers who started in the second week was brief and superficial.

M12 The deputy principal had observed the two teachers in post in the first week, and observations were planned for the three teaching subsequently.

M18 Emergency contact details for students are on a database to which no one at the summer centre had access, apart from the deputy principal. The centre manager received the relevant access authorisation and training in retrieving this information from the database immediately following the inspection visit. (see also S8)

M24 Publicity for the summer school states that the maximum class size is 15 students. Of the three classes running two consisted of 19 and one of 20 students.

Premises and resources

Findings are reported in the section below.

Teaching and learning

The following points were noted:

T3 All teachers have previous experience of teaching young learners.

T7 There are no cover arrangements for teachers' absence.

T9 There is no academic manager on site at most times.

T10 Observations are carried out by the deputy principal, who is TEFLQ.

T11 Courses are based around a workbook used by all the classes. The workbook is structured carefully to link with the activities and excursions planned into the students' programmes. It is intended that teachers supplement this with additional materials to meet the needs of students at different levels. However, there is no guidance to show teachers how to do this.

T13 Students do not receive weekly plans of what they are to cover in classes.

T17 Placement procedures include written tests but the age range in classes is inappropriately wide. Students' ages in the three classes running ranged from 7 to 14, 12 to 16, and 12 to 17 respectively.

T23–30. Each classroom was visited for around ten minutes. Teaching appeared to be broadly satisfactory.

Students were well-behaved. However, despite the different class levels (described as A1, B1, and B2) all teachers were using the same school-produced materials' booklet as the basis for their lesson. No supplementary materials were seen.

Welfare and student services

The following points were noted:

Care of students

W1 There is little obvious security at the school site, although it is supervised by porters. There are no gates or other barriers in use separating the school car park from the adjacent road, or from the rest of the school site. There is no reception desk or office to welcome or check on visitors' identity. The inspector was not asked to identify himself until he made contact with the centre manager. There are regular fire drills from the boarding house, but not from teaching accommodation. Signage for fire exit routes from teaching accommodation is poor. The inspector was told that Burlington has carried out its own risk assessments for premises but these were kept at headquarters and so were not seen during the visit.

W2 Dean Close has a major incident plan, shared with Burlington. Basic elements are given to teaching staff in their induction booklet, but no advice is given to students on how to react to an incident or emergency.

W3 The centre manager has responsibility for student welfare and his name is made known to students.

W5 Students are given three numbers to call in an emergency. At least one of these is always reachable.

Accommodation

Students are accommodated in a boarding house on the Dean Close site for which the school has exclusive use. Overnight supervision is by five staff; the centre manager and the four activity leaders. There are no group leaders or teachers resident in the house. The building is locked on a key pad, to which the staff in residence have the code but not the group leaders or teachers. Bathroom facilities and staff bedrooms are lockable. Apart from this, no areas of the building or bedrooms are secured with locks.

Students have bedrooms on corridors segregated by gender over three floors. Some corridors are reached by shared staircases, others have their own staircase. No signs indicate whether a corridor is reserved for male or female students or restriction on access by students not housed there. There is a range of bedroom types. Some consist of two single rooms which interconnect through a shared room containing shower and toilet. There are also, twin, triple and quad rooms, all with shared bathroom and toilet facilities.

Staff in the residence have single rooms adjacent to or on the corridors where students are housed. They have their own bathroom and toilets.

W9 The accommodation meets the criterion. Students were generally content with their rooms.

W10 The boarding house and rooms are cleaned daily.

W11 Burlington had inspected the accommodation before the course began but had not recorded the checks of suitability it had made.

Leisure opportunities

W25 Activity leaders are enthusiastic and have suitable expertise for their roles. Teachers routinely participate alongside activity leaders in trips and excursions. Students receive useful background information on destinations of excursions as part of their lessons.

W26 Risk assessments for excursions are read and signed for by activity leaders but are not sufficiently specific for each destination. Managers have prepared risks assessments for other activities, but not made them available to the activity leaders running them.

Premises and resources

Premises and facilities	Met
P1 Premises, including any external areas, are in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration, and provide a comfortable environment for students and staff.	Strength
P2 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Met
P3 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Met
P4 Free drinking water is available. A choice of appropriate food at affordable prices is available to students on site, if not available locally.	Met
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display of general information.	Not met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions, and for teachers to carry out their preparation and marking.	Met
Comments	
P1 The Dean Close premises are spacious and well maintained. Grounds are spacious and well kept. There are extensive recreational and sporting facilities to which students have supervised access.	
P2 Classrooms are suitably furnished, but only just large enough for the size of classes enrolled.	
P3 There is a large canteen. The boarding house and the building where teaching takes place have common rooms for students to relax in.	
P4 Free drinking water is provided. All meals are taken in the school refectory.	
P5 Signage is poor. There was little signage to indicate the presence or location of the summer school to those arriving on site. The few signs in evidence were small and poorly presented. There was no signage indicating the route between residences and the building where teaching takes place. There were insufficient signs showing fire exit routes from the main teaching areas.	
P6 There is adequate office space for all staff to carry out their work, and places for them to relax and store possessions.	

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

P8 There are simple resources for teachers' use, together with methodology reference books belonging to Dean Close to which teachers have access.
 P9 Technology such as interactive whiteboards appear well maintained, and were seen in action during the visit.
 P10 The inspector was told that the use of themed workbooks had resulted from a review of resources for teaching carried out by headquarters staff.

Safeguarding under 18s

Safeguarding under 18s	Met
S1 There is a safeguarding policy which specifies procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students under the age of 18. A named member of staff is responsible for implementing this policy and responding to child protection allegations.	Met
S2 The provider makes the policy known to all adults in contact with under 18s through their role with the organisation, and provides guidance or training relevant to its effective implementation.	Met
S3 The provider has written parental/guardian consent reflecting the level of care and support given to students under 18, including medical consent.	Met
S4 Recruitment procedures for all roles involving responsibility for or substantial access to under 18s are in line with safer recruitment good practice and the organisation's safeguarding policy.	Not met
S5 There are suitable arrangements for the supervision and safety of students during scheduled lessons and activities.	Met
S6 There are suitable arrangements for the supervision and safety of students outside the scheduled programme.	Met
S7 There are suitable arrangements for the accommodation of students.	Met
S8 There are suitable arrangements to ensure contact between the provider and parents, legal guardians or their nominated representatives concerning the welfare of students.	Not met

Comments

S1 There is a suitable safeguarding policy. The centre manager is the designated safeguarding lead for the summer school. However, his role is not directly referred to in his job description.
 S2 All teaching and activity leaders complete basic safeguarding training online before taking up their roles. The DSL is trained to specialist level.
 S3 Completed consent forms are in place.
 S4 A newly recruited teacher has only one reference. There is no written risk assessment concerning the teacher's engagement in regulated activity while the results of their DBS check is awaited. The teacher is not resident at the premises. A group leader has not provided the school with evidence of having been police checked and cleared.
 S5 Arrangements to supervise students are thorough. Supervision is close, and supervision ratios generous.
 S6 Students have very little unsupervised time outside scheduled activity. They are required to remain on the school campus at all times.
 S7 Accommodation is generally suitable. However, there are no signs in the boarding house making clear that male and female students should not enter each other's corridors.
 S8 Contact details for students' parents or carers are on a database to which no one at the summer centre had access, apart from the deputy principal. The centre manager received the relevant access authorisation and training in retrieving this information from the database immediately following the inspection visit.

Action taken on 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. Only points reviewed during this spot check are included here. Any points outstanding will be checked at the next full inspection.

M3 Cover arrangements for managers are tight and in the busy summer period when the deputy principal also has overall responsibility for the off-site course there is potential for overstretch and cover arrangements being insufficient.

Not yet addressed. There is no academic manager in place. The deputy principal who has oversight of academic management is not generally on-site during weekdays. There are no arrangements to cover for any teaching staff absences.

Conclusions

The provision for young students in London appears to be suitable. In Cheltenham, the premises and resources at Dean Close are mainly appropriate. However, aspects of the provision concerning the security and safety of students are unsatisfactory. The lack of an academic manager or any cover for other roles, indicates the school has not made demonstrable progress resolving the point to be addressed looked at during this visit.
