

Organisation name	Colchester English Study Centre (CESC)
Inspection date	23 November 2017

BACKGROUND

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	1991 (under former ownership)
Last full inspection	February 2017
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	July 2017
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	19 Lexden Road, Colchester C03 3PW
Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection	N/a
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of the inspection	Ipswich School, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 3SG
Sites inspected	CESC is located near the centre of Colchester in a house of three storeys, with gardens at the front and rear, and parking. The lower floor contains three classrooms, a common room, a conservatory, and a kitchen; there is also access to the rear gardens. The ground floor contains the reception area, three classrooms and four offices. The third floor contains four classrooms (making a total of 10 throughout the building), offices, a teachers' room, a staff kitchen, a small library and a computer room.

Student and staff profile

	At inspection	In peak week July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	20	110 in Colchester 110 in Ipswich
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	17	12
Typical age range	17–40	14–60
Typical length of stay	2–3 months	2–4 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Saudi, Italian, Turkish	Saudi, Italian, Turkish, Spanish
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	4	16

Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	6	11
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INTRODUCTION

Background

Colchester English Study Centre (CESC) was established in 1969. In August 2016 the school was purchased by an international consortium under the company name of Study in Colchester Ltd. As a result of the sale and change of ownership, accreditation was withdrawn. The school was invited to apply for accreditation as a new applicant. A full inspection took place in February 2017 with a supplementary inspection in July 2017 to inspect the summer programmes for junior students run at Ipswich School and in Colchester under the brand International Language Holidays. This inspection was the routine spot check following a first inspection. It was conducted by an inspector who had not taken part in either the previous full or supplementary inspections.

Preparation

The inspector contacted the school to enquire about student numbers and the availability of staff in the following three months. The exact date of the inspection was not given.

Programme and persons present

The inspection lasted half a day. Meetings were held with the principal/head of studies and the accommodation and marketing officer, and documentation was scrutinised. The inspector also spoke to the marketing and admissions director, the receptionist, the caretaker, the four teachers and a group of students. The premises were inspected, and the students were observed making use of the facilities at break time.

FINDINGS

The major change that has taken place since the last inspection is that the managing director, who was also acting as principal, no longer has a financial interest or role in the school. From November 2017 the role and title of principal has been combined with that of the head of studies. Staff reported that the arrangement is viewed positively.

There was quite a small student body at the time of the inspection: 20 students in four classes, studying general English, with one class focusing on IELTS preparation. Teachers reported that students were receiving a great deal of individual attention and students felt that they were making good progress within a 'family' atmosphere. Students in the focus group who were staying in homestay reported a high degree of satisfaction. At this time of year, there is a limited but satisfactory leisure programme. Following a suggestion from the students, the school plans to investigate ways of helping students to take part in weekend trips run by a suitable commercial company.

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.

Management

M1 A considerable amount of photocopying of coursebooks and other published materials takes place; the school should seek written confirmation and clarification from the relevant body (the CLA) that this copying does not breach the terms of the agreement, in particular the rule that only five per cent of a book may be photocopied.

Addressed. All students are required to buy or borrow a coursebook.

M8 The *Company Handbook* does not clearly describe the policy and procedure for capability issues.

Addressed. The policy and procedures are clearly described.

M9 An active programme of CPD linked to the collective and specific needs of all staff, including administration staff, is not yet in operation.

Addressed. An in-house programme of continuous professional development (CPD) is in place. For teachers there are regular group sessions, and individual sessions with the head of studies. Teachers keep a portfolio of CPD activities.

M15 The *Discipline and exclusions policy* document is not written in language that would be accessible to the students enrolled in the school.

Addressed. The text has been rewritten.

M18 Evidence of action being taken as a result of student feedback is not always recorded and dated.

Addressed. Immediate action is recorded. In addition, summary reports are compiled

M20 The complaints policy is not written in language which would be clear to low level students.

Not yet addressed. Thought has been given to the wording but the documentation needs updating in the light of personnel changes.

M21 In several places the descriptive language used is unnecessarily complicated and would not be accessible to students who do not have a good level of English (B1).

Addressed. Publicity has been reviewed. The most recent brochure is very clear.

M25 The IELTS flyer does not give the approximate cost of the external examination.

Addressed. Costs are included.

Resources and environment

R4 There is some student dissatisfaction with the lack of canteen facilities.

Addressed. This is not a point to be addressed. A canteen is not mentioned in publicity. There is a supermarket a five-minute walk away and there are drinks-making facilities, microwave ovens and a drinks and snacks machine in the student common room.

R7 The school's policy that coursebooks should be bought or hired by students studying for three weeks or more, and copied for shorter-stay students, is not working in practice. Most students are using photocopies. This does not allow them to adequately use and exploit the material.

Addressed. All students are required to buy or borrow a book. There was evidence that this policy is now working in practice.

Teaching and learning

T10 Only a limited number of internal and external training opportunities are provided to teachers.

Addressed. There is a regular programme of in-house teacher development sessions informed by the needs of teachers as identified during observations and appraisals.

T12 The 'portfolios' seen by the inspectors were not coherently organised and were little more than a collection of handouts.

Addressed. Attention has been paid to organising the portfolios; there are fewer photocopies.

T16 Suggestions on how to benefit linguistically from the UK context did not appear to be a systematic part of the learning programme for adults and there was little evidence of this either in the lessons observed or in the student folders.

Addressed. Ways in which students can benefit are included in the weekly schemes of work and in students' portfolios.

Welfare and student services

W4 The school's policy on abusive behaviour is written in language which is not sufficiently graded for the needs of lower level students. There is no guidance in the junior course handbook on how to deal with abusive behaviour.

Partially addressed. The language has been simplified but information about the policy for students is not sufficiently detailed.

W6 Transport information on how to travel to Colchester on the school's website does not include the costs of travel by trains and buses.

Addressed.

Care of under 18s

C3 Some of the publicity does not make it fully clear that students are unsupervised outside scheduled activities, for example, in the evening.

Partially addressed. This criterion is met because the information is clearly given in the consent form for parents of students aged under 18 on the junior courses and for students aged 16 and 17 on adult courses. However, information needs to be added that the students attending adult courses are responsible for buying their own lunches.

C4 The school is still in the process of ensuring that checks are carried out on all adults residing in homestays.

Addressed. There was a misunderstanding at the time of the first inspection. All hosts have always been checked by the school for work in the home so the school was already compliant.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit

There are no specific points. However, the school is aware of the need to change the wording of some of the documentation in the light of recent changes of personnel.

CONCLUSIONS

Staff and students expressed overall satisfaction with the provision. The school has continued to act upon the points to be addressed arising from the two inspections held earlier in the year. There are very few outstanding points to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION

The next inspection falls due in 2021; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Changes to summary statement

No changes need to be made to the summary statement.

Summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Colchester English Study Centre in February 2017 and July 2017. The Accreditation Scheme assesses the standards of management, resources and premises, teaching, welfare, and care of under 18s and accredits organisations which meet the overall standard in each area inspected (see www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation for details).

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

Strengths were noted in the areas of quality assurance and premises and facilities.

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