

Organisation name	Emerald Cultural Institute (UK) summer centres
Inspection date	31 July 2025
Current accreditation status	Accreditation under review
Reason for spot check	Signalled: end period under review

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation. The period of review may now be ended and accreditation continued until the next full inspection, which falls due in 2028.

Changes to the summary statement

The need for improvement in academic staff profile, academic management, course design, and teaching can now be removed.

Areas of strength can be added for student administration, premises and facilities, and leisure opportunities.

An updated summary statement can now be issued.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Emerald Cultural Institute (UK) in July 2024 and July 2025. 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 private language school offers vacation courses in general English for under 18s.

Strengths were noted in the areas of student administration, premises and facilities, and leisure opportunities.

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

Summary inspection findings

Management

The provision meets the section standard and exceeds it in some respects. The management of the provision operates to the benefit of the students, and in accordance with the provider's stated goals, values, and publicity. There are very effective enrolment procedures in place. *Student administration* is an area of strength.

Premises and resources

The provision meets the section standard. The premises provide students and staff with a very comfortable environment for work and relaxation. A range of learning resources is available, appropriate to the age and needs of the students. *Premises and facilities* is an area of strength.

Teaching and learning

The provision meets the section standard. The academic staff team has a professional profile appropriate to the context, and teachers receive sufficient guidance to ensure that they support students effectively in their learning. Course design documents provide support for teachers and students. The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme.

Welfare and student services

The provision meets the section standard and exceeds it in some respects. The school provides its students with appropriate levels of pastoral care. The accommodation offered by the school is well managed and entirely appropriate. The leisure programme is comprehensive, well designed and staffed. *Leisure opportunities* is an area of strength.

Safeguarding under 18s

The provision meets the section standard. There is good provision for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 within the centres, and in the leisure activities and accommodation provided. The safeguarding policy is suitably detailed. Staff are appropriately trained to implement it, and safer recruitment procedures are appropriate.

Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance

The items sampled were satisfactory.

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	July 2019
Last full inspection	July 2024
Subsequent checks/visits (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	Estimate at peak: July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	104	133
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	10	10
Typical age range	10–17	10–17
Typical length of stay	1–2 weeks	1–2 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Italian, Chinese	Spanish, Italian
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	8	9
Total number of managers including academic	4	4
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	0	0

Academic manager qualifications profile

Profile at inspection	
Professional qualifications	Number of academic managers
TEFLQ qualification and at least three years' full-time relevant teaching experience	1
Academic managers without TEFLQ qualification or three years' relevant experience	0
Total	1
Comments	

The Director of Studies was not scheduled to teach during the inspection period.

Teacher qualifications profile

Profile in week of inspection	
Professional qualifications	Number of teachers
TEFLQ qualification/profile	2
TEFLI qualification	2
ATEFL registered portfolio in progress*	0
Non-ELT-related qualified teacher status only (for short courses for under 18s)*	0
Holding specialist qualifications only (for ESP/CLIL)*	0
Alternative professional profile*	4
Total	8
Comments	

None.

Premises profile

Address of main site	Gordons School, Bagshot Road, Woking GU24 9PT
Additional sites in use	St George's School, Wells Lane, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 7DZ
Additional sites not in use	Rose Bruford College, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9DF
Sites inspected	Gordons School

Introduction

Background

Following the full inspection in July 2024, the school's accreditation was placed under review because the section standards for Teaching and learning were not met and there were weaknesses in P1 and W7. The period of review would be ended by a spot check within 12 months focusing on Teaching and learning.

Preparation

The spot check was carried out by two inspectors, one of whom had been involved in the previous inspection in 2024. One inspector contacted the head office in advance to check if there were any dates which would not be suitable and when key staff would be present. The Accreditation Unit sent the inspectors relevant documents. The inspectors looked at the Emerald Cultural Institute (ECI) website and a number of documents sent in advance relating to the action plan for the points to be addressed from the previous inspection.

Programme and persons present

The inspectors arrived at the Gordons School centre at 08.15 and left at 16.30. Meetings were held with the centre manager, the director of studies, the welfare manager, and the school director. Both inspectors also had a tour of the premises and accommodation. Focus group meetings were held with a group of students, the teachers, and with some of the group leaders.

Findings are reported in the following section and in the Action taken on points to be addressed.

Management

The provider has clear and realistic objectives for the future which are reviewed and updated by the senior management team. An annual review process linked to the CRG and end-of-summer staff feedback has been introduced. Job descriptions are reviewed annually and include safeguarding duties. On-site induction time has been increased. Publicity materials are now accurate for all centres.

Premises and resources

The organisation no longer uses the Cobham Hall centre where some issues were identified. The new centre near Woking is entirely suitable. Detailed risk assessments of premises and accommodation are in place for all three centres.

Teaching and learning

The teaching profile is largely appropriate for the courses offered. Academic management systems and procedures are appropriate and course design documents are suitable for the age and interests of the students.

Premises and resources

Premises and facilities	Area of strength
P1 Providers ensure the safety and security of students on their premises by measures appropriate to their age and background, and the location.	Met
P2 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
P3 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Met
P4 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Strength
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display or sharing of general information.	Met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for work, meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions.	Strength

Comments

P2 The premises are in a very good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration. Careful consideration has been given into the use of communal areas and toilets are clean and well maintained.

P4 Both centres provide extensive outdoor areas for student relaxation between lessons and activities, as well as a common room in each boarding house. Dining halls are spacious, and a good variety and quantity of food is offered at each centre.

P6 Staff at both centres have good access to spacious offices, teacher and activity leader areas, resource rooms, kitchens and lounges. Separate staff toilets are also available.

Teaching and learning

Academic staff profile	Met
T1 There is a clear recruitment and support policy for the academic team relevant to the stated course objectives and student profile.	
T2 The academic manager/academic management team has an appropriate professional profile to provide academic leadership.	
T3 The teaching team has ELT/TESOL qualifications, general level of education, experience, knowledge and skills relevant to the courses they are teaching.	

Comments

The academic staff team has a professional profile (qualifications and experience) that is largely appropriate to the organisation's context.

The recruitment and support policy is devised and implemented in line with the stated course objectives and the student profile. However, it contains insufficient information on how teachers with non-standard qualifications are offered additional support.

Academic management	Met
T4 Teachers are matched appropriately to courses and there are effective procedures for the appropriate timetabling of students, courses and classrooms.	Met
T5 There are formalised arrangements for covering for absent teachers which are satisfactory to students and staff.	Met
T6 Where enrolment is continuous, explicit attention is paid to all aspects of academic management affected.	Met
T7 There are effective arrangements for the academic induction of new teachers appropriate to their needs.	Met
T8 There are effective arrangements, led by an academic manager, to ensure appropriate day-to-day guidance and support for all teachers.	Met
T9 There are effective arrangements for the observation and monitoring of teachers' performance by a TEFLQ academic manager based on clear standards known to teachers.	Met
T10 There are effective procedures to ensure the continuing professional development (CPD) of all teachers to meet the needs of the individual teachers, the students, and the organisation.	Met

Comments

T9 Observation feedback forms are thoughtfully completed, but academic managers receive insufficient training and support in conducting observations.

Course design and implementation	Met
T11 The course design is comprehensive and is based on the provider's stated approach to learning or educational philosophy, and is appropriate to the learning context.	Met
T12 Courses include strategies which help students to develop their language skills outside the classroom and benefit linguistically from their stay in the UK.	Met
T13 Course design is regularly reviewed in light of the different and changing needs of students and feedback from teachers and students.	Met
T14 Written course outlines and intended learning outcomes, appropriate to the course length and type, are available to students and referred to in class.	Met

Comments

All criteria in this area are fully met.

Classroom observation record

Number of teachers seen	8
Number of observations	8
Parts of programme(s) observed	All

Comments

All teachers scheduled to teach on the date of the inspection were observed.

Teaching: classroom observation	Met
T19 Teachers produce accurate models of spoken and written English; they provide clear explanations and relevant examples of language and usage, that are appropriate to the aims of the lesson and suitable for the students' level.	Met
T20 The content of the lessons is based on the overall course objectives and takes into account the differing students' needs and backgrounds.	Met
T21 The intended learning outcomes of lessons are made known to students, and are achieved through an appropriate sequence of activities.	Not met
T22 Teaching techniques used are appropriate to the focus of the lesson, to the context, and to the needs of the group and individual learners.	Met
T23 Teachers enhance learning by effectively managing the classroom environment and teaching and learning resources.	Met
T24 Students receive and benefit from appropriate and timely feedback on their performance during the lesson.	Met
T25 Lessons include activities for teachers and students to evaluate whether learning is taking place.	Met
T26 Teachers promote a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere and students are engaged in the lesson.	Met

Comments

T19 Teachers provided generally satisfactory explanations of grammar and lexis. In better segments contextualised definitions and concept check questions were used to clarify meaning.

T20 The content of lessons was based on course objectives and in the vast majority of cases teachers had considered the age and interests of the students in the class.

T21 Lesson objectives were shared with students but were often expressed as teacher aims and in language that was inaccessible to students.

T22 A varied range of teaching techniques were demonstrated. In better segments there was an effective use of concept check questions and instructions were clear, checked and modelled.

T23. Most lessons included a good range of activities appropriate to the age of the students and materials were colourful and stimulating. In better lessons students were regrouped to provide variety and maintain interest.

T24 Feedback was generally appropriate. Several teachers monitored activities well and provided individual and whole class error correction but in weaker segments there were missed opportunities for the correction of errors.

T25 Lesson plans included short assessment activities to enable students and teachers to evaluate learning and a final evaluation and reflection stage.

T26 In the vast majority of lessons there was a positive learning atmosphere and students were fully engaged.

Teachers had developed a good rapport with their learners and lessons involved pace, variety and the personalisation of materials. However, in an isolated case the lesson was very teacher centred and students were disengaged.

Action taken on points to be addressed

Points which must be addressed before continued accreditation can be recommended

Teaching and learning

T1 The recruitment and support policy is not sufficiently well devised and implemented in line with the stated course objectives and the student profile.

Partially Addressed. Course design documents now include good guidance for teachers. However, the recruitment and support policy does not provide sufficient information on how teachers with non-standard qualifications are offered additional support.

T7 First day induction time is inadequate. Staff did not feel fully prepared for their roles and ongoing support was not sufficient for them to feel confident or to be fully effective in the initial stages of their employment.

Addressed. Induction procedures include both online and on-site training days and staff reported that they felt well prepared for their role following this process.

T8 Members of the academic management team at one centre do not base themselves in the teachers' room during preparation and break times which limits the opportunity to provide effective day-to-day guidance and support for teachers. The senior teacher did not start until week two of the programme.

Addressed. Teachers at the focus group commented that they received good day-to-day support and that the DoS and senior teacher are always available.

T9 While academic managers are suitably qualified for the role, they had received little guidance on how to observe classes and provide meaningful feedback to their teachers. Observation feedback reports were inadequate.

Partially addressed. Observation feedback forms are more thoughtfully completed but academic managers would benefit from further training and support in conducting observations.

T10 Although CPD takes place every week and is compulsory for full-time staff, the topics selected were not linked to observation feedback and did not reflect the needs of the teachers.

Addressed. The CPD programme is based on teacher requests and linked to issues arising from observations.

T11 There is a scheme of work for the first lesson of the day linked to a coursebook. However, there is very little guidance and no course design document for the second lesson which is based around writing a daily journal, an excursion lesson and project work. The afternoon intensive course has no syllabus or guidance for teachers. Course design does not consider study and learning strategies that support independent learning.

Addressed. The syllabus now covers all parts of the programme.

T14 Course outlines are not made available to students for any of the course components.

Addressed. Weekly 'can do' statements are provided to students and referred to in class.

Points which must be addressed before the next course

Premises and resources

P1 Risk assessments do not consider potential risks to the students' safety and security in relation to the specific areas of the premises used by the organisation.

Addressed. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for all centres and accommodation provision.

Welfare and student services

W7 The main house in Cobham Hall is in need of renovation; there were plumbing issues that had not been fully resolved at the time of the inspection.

Addressed. This centre is no longer used by the organisation.

Other points to be addressed

Management

M2 Objectives for the future of the operation do not include time frames or evidence of progress to date.

Addressed. The provider has clear and realistic objectives for the future which are regularly reviewed and updated by the senior management team.

M7 Review processes are informal and do not include a systematic review of feedback from key staff at each centre

Addressed. An annual review process linked to the CRG and end-of-summer staff feedback has been introduced.

M9 Job descriptions do not include safeguarding responsibilities and there is no evidence of review dates.

Addressed. Job descriptions are reviewed annually and include safeguarding duties.

M11 On arrival at the centres insufficient time is allocated for staff training in key roles.

Addressed. On-site induction time has been increased and is now considered effective by new and returning staff.

M23 The minimum age for study on courses is advertised as 11 years but students as young as eight were accepted at one centre.

Addressed. The minimum age for study is now 10 years and is strictly adhered to.

M26 Information on the number of students sharing a room is described as between two and four whereas this was up to six students at one centre. Cobham Hall is described as modern and spacious but this is not the case with the accommodation in the main hall. It is not made clear that common rooms are single gender spaces.

Addressed. Descriptions of accommodation offered are now entirely accurate. Cobham Hall is no longer used as a summer centre.

Teaching and learning

T20 Some teachers did not sufficiently consider the students' age, needs or interests when planning activities.

Addressed. The content of lessons was based on course objectives and in the vast majority of cases teachers had considered the age and interests of the students in the class.

T21 It was not always clear how intended learning outcomes were shared with students. Objectives were expressed as one-word summaries or in language inaccessible to students.

Not Addressed. Lesson objectives were shared with students but were often expressed as teacher aims and in language that was inaccessible to students.

T22 A limited range of teaching techniques was used; instructions were not clear or checked and there was excessive teacher talk in some lessons.

Addressed. A varied range of teaching techniques were demonstrated.

T26 Several lessons were very teacher focused, static and lacked pace or variety.

Addressed. In the vast majority of lessons there was a positive learning atmosphere and students were fully engaged. Teachers had developed a good rapport with their learners and lessons involved pace, variety and the personalisation of materials.

Welfare and student services

W2 Information in the student handbooks and on noticeboards in Cobham Hall is not sufficiently simplified and does not make clear who to see regarding any welfare problems.

Addressed. Cobham Hall is no longer used. Information in student handbooks and noticeboards at the new centre is now clearly expressed.

Conclusions

The organisation has put resources, systems and support in place to address the vast majority of the points to be addressed from the previous report. All areas which were identified as a 'need for improvement' now meet the required standard overall. The curriculum has been updated with additional support and guidance provided for teachers. Focused training and development have been given to teachers in areas related to the points to be addressed in the section of teaching and learning. Almost all points arising from the previous inspection in this section have been satisfactorily addressed.

Items requiring early action

None.
