

Organisation name	Gloucestershire College, Cheltenham
Inspection date	31 August 2018
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: follow up on Points to be addressed

Recommendation

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

Changes to the summary statement

The need for improvement in the areas of accommodation and care of under 18s can now be removed.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Gloucestershire College in June and July 2017, and August 2018. 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 English language teaching department of this college of further education offers courses in general, academic and professional English for adults (16+), for closed groups of under 18s and adults (16+), and vacation courses for under 18s and adults (16+).

Strengths were noted in the areas of staff management, student administration, premises and facilities, learning resources, course design, and care of students.

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

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	1992
Last full inspection	2017
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	August 2018
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	ESOL courses
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)	21	269
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	19	12
Typical age range	19–22	12–17
Typical length of stay	3–4 weeks	2–3 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Japanese	Chinese, Japanese, French
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	3	24
Total number of managers including academic	1	3

Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	3	21
Premises profile		
Address of main site	Cheltenham Campus, Princess Elizabeth Way, Cheltenham GL51 7 SJ	
Additional sites in use	Gloucester Campus, Llanthony Road, Gloucester GL2 5JQ	
Additional sites not in use	N/a	
Sites inspected	The campus at Cheltenham is compact and the building is modern. There is an 'international area' on the ground floor: classrooms, staffroom and offices, including the international and accommodation office, are close together. Students can gather at the 'gateway hub' which is placed centrally. Students have full use of the other facilities at the college including cafés, computer rooms and a library. There are lifts to all floors. During the summer there is an additional staffroom, and another set of classrooms is used, and the section can make use of facilities for cooking, arts and crafts and drama. There is a small outdoor sports area and the adjacent park is used for outdoor activities.	

Introduction

Background to the provision

Gloucestershire College (GC) is a general further education college for approximately 10,000 students aged 16+, with three main campuses in Cheltenham, Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. Provision ranges from entry to degree level; it includes study programmes for students aged 16 to 19, adult provision (including ESOL), apprenticeships, traineeships and provision for students who have high needs.

The principal is supported by three vice principals, one of whom has responsibility for the International School, where EFL is located, together with ESOL and international. The head of school has responsibility for academic leadership; international development and recruitment; and welfare and accommodation for international students. The academic manager and the international manager have responsibility for academic and operational management respectively.

EFL courses are run for adults (16+; 18+ for evening provision) during the academic year at the Cheltenham campus. During July and August summer schools are held at the Cheltenham campus for adults (aged 16+) and for juniors (aged 12–17). In July a junior summer school (aged 12–17) is also held at the Gloucester campus. GC also accepts groups of under 18s at other times of the year; in 2018 they delivered a course for 78 students in March and for 23 students in April.

In summer 2018 the adult course at Cheltenham ran for nine weeks, and the junior for four, the junior course at Gloucester ran for three weeks. All the students came as members of groups for the Gloucester course with group leaders. The majority of the students on the course in Cheltenham were also members of groups with group leaders, but there was a small number of independent students. Some institutions send students to the GC summer school year on year.

Background to the inspection

After the last full inspection in summer 2017 continued accreditation was recommended. However, evidence had to be submitted within three months to demonstrate that weaknesses in accommodation and care of under 18s had been addressed. In addition, it was recommended that a spot check should be conducted in July 2018 to check that the accommodation arrangements for the students aged under 18 were satisfactory. An action plan and associated documentation was duly submitted by GC at the end of 2017; the Accreditation Scheme committee was satisfied that the points had been addressed.

This is the report relating to the follow-up spot check inspection.

Preparation

The Accreditation Unit sent the reporting inspector documentation relating to the 2017 inspection, which included GC's action plan on the points to be addressed. She also researched the provision on the college website. The school was given no indication of the date of the intended visit, but in July the academic manager contacted the Accreditation Unit to say that the international manager would be on annual leave for two weeks in July; this coincided with the inspection date scheduled by the inspector. It was, therefore, decided to postpone the spot check until the final week of August, when both the college personnel and the inspector were available.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at the Cheltenham campus at 10.15 and left at 14.50. The head of international and the international manager were at the Gloucester campus, but both were contacted and returned to Cheltenham immediately. The inspector had meetings with the head of international, the academic manager, the international

manager, the Gloucester summer school centre manager and the accommodation assistant. She also met with a group of four Japanese students, who were on the last day of a four-week course at the Cheltenham adult summer school, and had been accommodated in homestays.

The basis of discussions was the points to be addressed from the 2017 report, which related to aspects of *Welfare and student services* and *Safeguarding under 18s*. The college had provided a comprehensive action plan, and points made in it provided the focus for verification.

Findings

Significant changes since the last inspection

Management

The head of the international school has returned from maternity leave.

Following a re-organisation of responsibilities in the senior leadership team, the international brief has been allocated to a different vice principal.

GC has taken the decision to no longer deliver A-level courses, which has had an impact on international student numbers.

Premises and resources

The international team, with the exception of the academic manager, and the 'international' classrooms, staffroom and administration, have relocated from premises on the second floor to equivalent accommodation on the ground floor.

Safeguarding under 18s

This year on the Cheltenham junior summer school a safeguarding officer was employed with specific responsibility for ensuring the GC safeguarding policy was followed operationally.

GC joined a special interest group for providers working with young learners.

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.

Welfare and student services

W12 (2018: W11) Records of Gas Safe checks for Gloucester homestays were incomplete.

Addressed. The database shows that all homestays in Gloucester (and Cheltenham) have Gas Safe certificates in place. It records the numbers and expiry dates of the hosts' certificate. For hosts for whom GC did not have a copy of the certificate, or who were non-compliant, a new gas safety check was done at the college's expense.

W14 (2018: W13) There is no formalised system for collecting initial feedback in written form on homestays and no routine checking of the number of students in homestays or their nationalities.

Addressed. GC has devised an initial homestay feedback questionnaire, which the students complete on the first day of their course. This adds to similar information already gathered on departure. At the time of the inspection the academic manager had just produced a collation of the results of the initial and departure feedback for the summer schools' homestays: a 93 per cent satisfaction rate was recorded, out of 280 responses.

W16 (2018: W16) Three homestay hosts on the current accommodation register are shown as accepting more than four students. One junior Cheltenham student in July was accommodated in a homestay accepting six students. Another host in Cheltenham had 12 students. Three students from the college were placed there, one of whom was under 18.

Addressed. Sampling of the database revealed that there were no hosts who had accommodated more than four students simultaneously. The *Application to provide homestay accommodation 2017-18*, the *Homestay Contract* and the *Homestay Guide* stipulate that the maximum number of students to be accommodated from any combination of colleges is four. The initial homestay questionnaire asks a question about the number of other students in the household and their nationalities. A new accommodation register has been created alongside a newly developed placement system which contains procedural checks to verify the number and age of students with each homestay.

Care of under 18s

C4 (2018: S4) Records of DBS checks on adults in Gloucester homestays were incomplete; there are no records of DBS checks on adults in five Gloucester homestays.

Addressed. All homestay hosts on the Cheltenham and Gloucester spreadsheet have a DBS certificate number. The college keeps a record of all resident adults over 18 and of those likely to be part of the household from time to time, such as returning university students. GC staff tick Box 66, so all residents in a household are covered, and hosts are encouraged to register for the update service; to date, 50 per cent have done so. The college's revised policy is that the number of hosts who have completed the DBS procedure will determine the number of beds available for summer school. Staff training on all aspects of homestay provision has taken place during 2018.

C6 (2018: S6) There is insufficient guidance for 16 and 17 year-olds on adult courses as to what they may or not do outside lessons and no specific parental consent form for this age group. The 'consent to care' form confirming their agreement to the arrangements made for under 18s at the college is not sufficiently detailed. Group leaders do not routinely pass parental consent forms on to the college. The college has not obtained signed copies of the revised parental consent form for all students. Curfew times are not well understood by all hosts or all students.

Addressed. The issue highlighted apparently arose from a difference in timetable which in effect created times when 16 and 17 year-olds on adult courses were free early and, for those times, guidance was lacking. GC have changed the timetable for 2018 and hence changed the parameters for 16 and 17 year-olds on adult courses, who must attend every afternoon activity/class so that they are on site until 17.00 every day. In addition, all students are given a student agreement form on the first day which includes guidance and rules of what they may or may not do outside lessons. These are also clearly set out in the student handbook.

The Summer School Group Application Form ages 12–17 and Summer School Application Form Independent which cover 'consent to care' and confirm agreement to the arrangements made for under 18s are now much more detailed and comprehensive. Each point for which consent is sought is clearly itemised. Documentation, including the application forms and the *Summer School Agent Service Agreement*, has been revised with a time specified for the receipt of signed copies of the parental consent form for all students. Consent forms were in place for all relevant students.

To ensure curfew times are well understood by students and hosts they are included in student induction and homestay hosts' interview/visit and are explicit in the following documentation:

Summer School Group Application Form ages 12–17; Summer School Application Form Independent; Student Handbook; Homestay - Expectations of students; Homestay Contract; Homestay Guide

C7 (2018: S7) One student under 18 on the year-round programme was permitted to move to private home accommodation. One student under 18 on the summer course was placed in a Cheltenham homestay accepting six students.

Addressed. The college has incorporated procedural checks in the new placement system to verify the number and age of student, to ensure this does not happen again. Staff training on policies and the system has taken place.

New points arising from this visit which were addressed in the course of the visit

Welfare and student services

W11 Despite clear instructions to hosts about sharing the important elements of the fire risk assessment with the student, none of the students in the student group recalled that their homestay host had told them about fire exits and procedures in case of a fire.

Addressed. The initial homestay feedback questionnaire has been amended to include a question about whether fire safety was covered by the homestay host.

W17 Despite clear instructions to hosts about not accommodating more than one student with the same language, two of the Japanese students who spoke to the inspector commented that there was another Japanese speaker, not from their group, at their homestay.

Addressed. The *Application to provide Homestay Accommodation* form and the *Homestay Guide* have been updated to make explicit the requirements regarding students with the same first language not being hosted in the same homestay without written permission. These documents also now correspond with and support the GC *Homestay contract* which has always been clear and explicit on this point.

Conclusions

The college's commitment to addressing the points in the 2017 inspection report is demonstrated by the amount of resource put into the review and action plan: a data partner worked with the academic manager and the international

team on reviewing the systems prior to submission of the plan in December 2017, and an external consultant was appointed to “provide management with an independent advisory opinion that the college’s arrangements with regard to the accommodation for international students meets (sic) the standards of the British Council.”

Gloucestershire College has gone to great lengths to address the points highlighted in the last inspection report, and acted with alacrity on the two new points raised in the course of the spot check. The college’s action plan is comprehensive, and the systems and documentation have been rigorously reviewed and revised, such that all the issues have been fully addressed. The 2018 summer school student homestay survey indicates a very high degree of satisfaction with the provision, and this was echoed by the students who spoke to the inspector.
