## BACKGROUND

### Organisation profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection history</th>
<th>Dates/details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First inspection</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last full inspection</td>
<td>July 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent spot check (if applicable)</td>
<td>August 2017 (this report)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre**: International Baccalaureate
- **Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates**: Hattemer Academy, Paris; Collegi Internacional del Pirineu, Andorra; Cours Sainte-Anne; Cours a Distance Legendre; L’ecole par correspondance; Learnissimo

### Current accreditation status and reason for spot check

- **Current accredited status**: Accredited
- **Reason for spot check**: Signalled: monitor effect of change of ownership

### Premises profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address of main site</th>
<th>7b Wyndham Place, London W1H 1PN (WP) Upper Primary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection</td>
<td>4 York Terrace East, Regents Park, London NW1 4PT (YTE) Nursery and Lower Primary 21 Star Street, London W2 1QB (SS) Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of the inspection</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites inspected</td>
<td>The Star Street site was refurbished in 2012. It is based in a Victorian school building, constructed round a central outdoor area which is used for student recreation. There is a dining room in the semi-basement, with classrooms and offices on three floors, including specialist art, music and science rooms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Student and staff profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At inspection</th>
<th>In peak week July 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical age range</td>
<td>3–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical length of stay (weeks)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant nationalities</td>
<td>Turkish, Saudi Arabian, Chinese, Italian, Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of administrative/ancillary staff</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background

The International Community School (ICS) was founded in 1979 and first accredited in 1984. In late summer 2016 the school informed the Accreditation Unit of a change of ownership: on 29 September 2016 the school was acquired from ICS Education LLP by Alma Learning Group through its UK subsidiary International Community Schools Ltd. The company registration number in England and Wales is 53876115 R.C.S.

Alma Learning Group, based in Paris and incorporated in 2011, is a French educational consortium which owns independent pre-primary, primary and secondary schools in mainland Europe, and provides distance-learning and home-tutoring services in addition to training in a number of vocational areas. ICS is its first UK acquisition.

ICS operates on three separate sites, as outlined in the Premises Profile above. It continues to offer mainstream academic-year courses from September to the end of June, following the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme. From the end of June until the end of August it offers summer courses, focusing on the development of English language skills through a combination of language classes and classes which integrate the learning of English and subject-specific content under the label ‘The English School Experience’.

Following the last full inspection in July 2016 the school was asked to submit documentary evidence within six months to demonstrate that the issue relating to Legal and statutory regulations (M1) had been addressed. The documentation was provided and was confirmed as satisfactory.

In October 2016, following notification of the change of ownership, the ASAC recommended a spot check to be carried out in 2017 to assess the effect of this change. This is the report of that spot check.

Preparation

The spot check was carried out by the co-inspector for the full inspection in July 2016. She made contact with the director of the summer school to check whether any days should be avoided for the visit, but the precise date of the inspection was not provided to the school. The inspector received documentation from the Accreditation Unit and she read the school’s website.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at the Star Street premises at 12.15 and left at 15.45. She had face-to-face discussions with the principal, and the summer school director, and a telephone interview with the business director summer school, based in France. She also met a group of six secondary teachers, one of whom had been employed in previous years. The group included two subject specialists and the teacher responsible for the new course which was being delivered. She also talked to the three students enrolled on this new course, one of whom was in homestay accommodation, and checked documentation.

FINDINGS

Change of ownership

Following the change in ownership there have as yet been few changes to ICS’s operation. These changes were described without exception by the staff interviewed as very positive.

Management

The management structure of the school has not changed, although this year there were no assistant directors of studies (ADoS) at the centres because student numbers were not thought to warrant them. In the nursery/lower primary division in compensation a floating teaching assistant was employed as support.

The principal and her staff have all worked at the school for a number of years. At the time of the last inspection the director of summer schools had just left and was ably replaced by his deputy, a permanent member of the staff. She was on leave this summer and the post was passed to the current director, who was on maternity leave last year, but who had previously held the posts of director of studies (DoS) for both the higher primary and secondary provision, and latterly deputy summer school director. She was supported in her preparations for the 2017 summer school by last year’s deputy director/director. The secondary DoS had been a teacher at the school during the academic year, had been an ADoS and was in his fifth summer at ICS. There were 21 returning summer staff and 16 staff from the year-round school as well as 30 new summer teachers. So continuity of staffing has been maintained.

The principal and the director indicated that communication between them and head office managers and two administrators in France was excellent, with daily phone calls and emails, as well as regular visits. The principal reported that she felt the company had genuine respect for the academic aspects of the school while bringing superb business acumen to bear; she judged the new owners brought concept, vision and mission. She was confident that there would be no significant changes for the next three years but that the new company would
develop the school through its professional competence in finance, human resources, marketing and its use of online platforms. The summer school director, and the returning teacher, reported that nothing had changed for summer 2017 operationally apart from closer financial oversight, which both considered as positive, since this had not resulted in any restriction on resources. The business director, summer school, reported the company was very happy with the acquisition of ICS and judged it had huge potential; he was pleased to have a school delivering the IB programme, and valued the quality of the provision. He confirmed that the company was not interested in changing the identity of the school, but planned to improve its financial management and marketing.

The recruitment process and induction procedures have not changed. There are comprehensive procedures, checklists and templates for each stage of recruitment, and interviews for all staff (including returners) are full and thorough, and the staff files checked were well documented. The staff interviewed reported that they felt valued and supported. This summer year-round staff were given a bonus as an incentive to help for a limited period with the induction and support of new summer school staff.

Quality assurance
There have been no changes in quality assurance procedures; weekly student/parent feedback is very positive, and the students on the new ‘Ticket to Universities’ course, who were completing their penultimate day, were very enthusiastic about the course structure and content (see Academic management).

Publicity
Publicity consists of an ICS website, which is new since the new ownership, and a brochure, with an insert sheet relating to new courses. The school also has a social media presence.

The insert for the Ticket to Universities course states that it is “for students aged 16-17 years.” One of the students enrolled was 18 (M24). This was amended in the course of the inspection process.

The website home page used the British Council logo, not the Accreditation Scheme marque. The Summer School home page also stated that “ICS is recognised as a Centre of Excellence, based on a 2016 British Council Inspection which placed ICS among the top English language schools in the UK…” This is potentially misleading, as the Scheme does not rank providers (M29). Both issues were attended to and deleted from the website soon after the inspection.

Premises and facilities
There has been no change to the premises and facilities. However, the premises at York Terrace East are no longer available from September 2017. The result of this will be that the nursery and lower primary provision will be moved to join the rest of the primary provision at the Wyndham Place premises. This may result in the ten-year-olds being moved to Star Street, where there is greater capacity.

Academic management
Two new summer programmes have been designed since the last inspection.

‘Discover London’ has been adapted; it is now not wholly focused on visits, but includes 15 hours of classroom-based language work oriented towards places of interest in London visited in the afternoon. There are 17.5 hours timetabled for visits. The course has been re-branded as ‘Conversational English in London’.

‘Ticket to Universities’ is a completely new course, aimed at students in their final years at school who have an interest in attending an English-medium university. The two-week course includes 25.5 hours of preparation for an English language test required for university entrance, 17 hours of academic orientation, including visits to UK universities, and 7.5 hours of university application workshops. (See also Care of under 18s.)

The inspector examined the course outlines and the schemes of work for both programmes. Both appeared appropriate in terms of outcomes and course content. ‘Conversational English in London’ students and staff were off premises on a visit at the time of the spot check inspection, so were not available for interview, but, as reported under Management, ‘Ticket to Universities’ students reported positively on their experience.

There is one proposed change to the summer school provision. Currently classes finish at around 15.30, depending on the age group. The school intends to lengthen the school day by an hour.

In addition, the school plans to deliver a two-week Easter and a one-week winter vacation course, with written and spoken language-focused classes in the mornings and excursions in the afternoon.

Welfare and student services
There have been no significant changes to the policies, procedures and provision.

However, the company has negotiated an agreement with a local university to rent an annexe sleeping 65 during...
the summer. The result of this will be that fewer summer school students aged 11-15 will be accommodated in homestay accommodation, about which, according to the business director summer school, feedback has been mixed. Homestays are currently managed by an agency registered with the British Council. The corollary of this will be that the school will employ activity leaders to supervise the residence, and will introduce mandatory excursions for those students in residence on Saturday and Sundays. So the next few years will see a change to the shape and type of provision offered by ICS.

Care of under 18s
Again, there have been no significant changes. However, it is envisaged that students enrolling on the ‘Ticket to Universities’ course may be in their final year of school and may therefore be over 18. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the publicity reflects the fact that 16 and 17 year-olds will be mixing with over 18s, and also to ensure that the parental consent form informs parents of this fact, and their permission is sought (C3). In addition, the current form does not ask for permission to administer emergency medical treatment.

POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED
Points from the previous full inspection with comments (in bold) to indicate how far these have been addressed.

Management
M1 Photocopiers did not display clear guidance about the limits on photocopying allowed under the CLA scheme. Addressed. (See Background above).
M25 Information relating to refunds is only available in the terms and conditions which, on the website, are only accessible as part of the booking process. This was amended in the course of the inspection process.

Resources and environment
R3 Some of the rooms at the secondary centre were not laid out appropriately for language teaching. Not yet addressed. (Science labs. have fixed seating and are mostly deployed for science, not language teaching.)

Teaching and learning
T23 In a few cases some of the models of English provided were not completely appropriate. Addressed. Account has been taken of this in professional development sessions.
T26 In some cases not enough time was spent helping learners to focus on new language through repetition or extension into different contexts. Addressed. As above.
T28 There was no feedback on the pronunciation of words in groups, or on stress at word or sentence level. Addressed. As above.

Welfare and student services
W14 According to the agency, ICS are not very quick at responding to problems raised by the hosts via the agency. Addressed. Close liaison with the agency over problems has been maintained this year.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit
Care of under 18s
C3 The parental consent form does not re-iterate the fact that students enrolled on the ‘Ticket to Universities’ course will be 16, 17 and 18, and parents do not sign to indicate that they understand their children will be treated as adults.

CONCLUSIONS
The change of ownership has been implemented smoothly. ICS continues to maintain high standards in all aspects of its work, and the relationship between the new owners and the school management and staff is viewed by all as constructive and supportive. No significant changes have been made in 2017, but some are planned for 2018 onwards. Publicity materials have been amended in line with the guidelines on claiming accreditation set out in Section 3.1 of the Handbook. The issue related to Legal and statutory compliance was dealt with by submitting satisfactory documentation.

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

Changes to summary statement

An updated summary statement can now be issued.

Summary statement from previous report:

The British Council inspected and accredited International Community School, London in July 2016. 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 under 18s and vacation courses for under 18s.

Strengths were noted in the areas of staff management, quality assurance, publicity, academic management, course design, teaching, care of students, leisure opportunities, and care of under 18s.

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

Amended summary statement:

The British Council inspected and accredited International Community School, London in July 2016. 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 under 18s and vacation courses for under 18s and young adults (16+).

Strengths were noted in the areas of staff management, quality assurance, publicity, academic management, course design, teaching, care of students, leisure opportunities, and care of under 18s.

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