

Organisation name	Norwich Study Centre
Inspection date	17 August 2017

BACKGROUND

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2004
Last full inspection	September 2016
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	Specialist courses for teachers of EFL
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	Signalled: follow up on Points to be addressed

Premises profile

Address of main site	4–5 Tombland, Norwich NR3 1HE
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	N/a
Sites inspected	4–5 Tombland, Norwich NR3 1HE

Student and staff profile

	At inspection	In peak week: July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	75	145
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	13	12
Typical age range	13–64	12–64
Typical length of stay	2–6 weeks	3 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Saudi Arabian, German	Spanish, Italian
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	8	15
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	5	5

INTRODUCTION

Background

The school was inspected in September 2016. Continued accreditation was awarded, subject to a spot check within 12 months focusing on care of under 18s and publicity, and on checking continuity of academic management in the light of recent (at the time of the inspection) changes to the academic management team. The inspector who conducted this spot check was not involved in the 2016 inspection.

Preparation

The inspector contacted the school in June to ask for background documentation (publicity, organogram, action plan for dealing with the points to be addressed from the 2016 inspection), and to establish if there were any planned absences for key members of staff. The planned date for the inspection was not disclosed.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 09.00 and left at 11.30. He had meetings with the school director, the director of studies (DoS), the office team leader, the accommodation officer, and members of the publicity and marketing team.

FINDINGS

Publicity

Publicity consists of a brochure (cover with printed inserts) and a website. The cover has not been updated since the 2016 inspection, so still shows the old version of the Accreditation Scheme marque, but printed sheets have been updated in many cases. The website was about to be updated at the time of the inspection. This report is based on the website as of 6 September 2017. The points to be addressed section at the end of the report shows how far the issues identified in 2016 have been rectified.

Academic management

At the time of the 2016 inspection, the DoS was about to leave, and provisional arrangements had been made for academic management responsibilities to be shared out among members of the teaching team. The inspectors judged that these arrangements would lead to problems of coherence and continuity of academic management. An external appointment of a full-time DoS was made with effect from October 2016, and the new appointee has settled down well. She has led a review of the afternoon general English programme, involving the creation of a syllabus around a topic-based series of published materials; she has strengthened the in-house continuing professional development (CPD) programme; and she has introduced drop-in observations to supplement the regular, monitoring observations.

Care of under 18s

The 2016 report showed that many aspects of the care of under 18s were handled satisfactorily, but a number of criteria were not met because of failures in dealing with a single case of a student living in privately rented accommodation, whose circumstances had not been adequately investigated. Steps have now been taken to ensure that the circumstance of any under 18s whose accommodation is not provided through the school are thoroughly investigated. At the time of the spot check, there were no students in this category.

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.

Points to be addressed within 12 months

Management

M1 Sampling identified the following issue: the school may be in breach of CLA regulations regarding the amount of a book that can be copied; the school should seek further advice from the relevant regulatory body.

Addressed. Students are now required to buy a copy of the coursebook.

M23 Levels are not mentioned for all courses.

Addressed.

M24 The fact that the minimum age may be 14 at certain times of year is not sufficiently clear.

Addressed. The minimum age for the general English courses is now given as 16. For the young learner courses it is shown as 11.

M25 There is no information on the approximate costs of course-related examination fees or of any leisure programme not included in the course fees.

Partially addressed. Costs of course-related examination fees are given, but no costs are shown for the range of social activities highlighted on the website.

M28 Teachers are described as 'fully qualified' in the brochure.

Addressed.

M29 The accreditation scheme marque is used to describe teacher training courses which are not eligible for accreditation.

Partially addressed. The teacher training page of the website contains a disclaimer stating that these courses are not accredited. However, the standard footer for all the pages contains the Accreditation Scheme marque (though in its latest version, referring to accreditation 'for the teaching of English in the

UK).

Care of under 18s

C4 Currently potential hosts are not required to provide references. Some of the files for members of staff do not include two references and for others the question asking referees about the applicant's suitability to have access to under 18s has not been answered.

Not yet fully addressed. Hosts are now required to provide references. However, of three files sampled, one had no references, and another had only one.

C6 Not enough care had been taken to ensure the supervision arrangements for a 17-year-old student.

Addressed. This was a single instance of a student staying in privately arranged accommodation. Steps have now been put in place to ensure that the supervision arrangements for such students are investigated.

C7 Written consent had not been obtained for the accommodation arrangements for a student aged under 18.

Addressed. This was a single instance of a student staying in privately arranged accommodation. Steps have now been put in place to ensure that parental consent for any such students is obtained.

C8 The school did not have the contact details of the parents/legal guardian of a student aged under 18.

Addressed. This was a single instance of a student staying in privately arranged accommodation. Steps have now been put in place to ensure that the contact details of the parent/legal guardian of all students under 18 are obtained.

Other points to be addressed

Management

M2 The job title 'education co-ordinator' does not make the nature of this role sufficiently clear.

Addressed. This post has been abolished.

M6 Some staff files lacked references or copies of certificates.

Addressed. Staff files sampled were complete.

Teaching and learning

T12 The skeletal syllabuses provided for afternoon classes do not offer enough guidance for less experienced teachers.

Addressed. New syllabuses have been developed.

T16 There is limited evidence of teachers helping students to benefit linguistically from their stay in the UK.

Addressed. This is now an integral component of regular project work.

T24 At times, lesson content was somewhat bland - related to characters in the coursebook rather than to students' own interests.

Addressed. This has been a specific focus in CPD sessions.

T30 In weaker segments, the lack of personalisation and contextualisation resulted in students showing limited interest.

Addressed. This has been a specific focus in CPD sessions.

Welfare and student services

W4 The information about the policies given to students in their handbooks is not accessible except to those with an advanced level of English.

Addressed. Policies have been re-written in plain and simpler English.

W7 Handbooks contain a great deal of information and are written in language which is not easy for young students and those with a lower level of English to understand.

Addressed. Handbooks have been re-written in plain and simpler English.

W11 A significant number of active hosts have not been revisited within two years.

Addressed. A large number of active hosts have recently been re-visited, and a programme has been drawn up for visiting the rest.

W28 It is not evident that risk assessments are used to inform guidelines for accompanying staff members and group leaders.

Addressed. Guidelines have been re-written taking account of the risk assessments.

Care of under 18s

C3 Publicity does not give an accurate description of the level of care given to students under 18. Information is not easy to access on the website and is insufficiently detailed in the brochure

Partially addressed. Very little information is contained in the brochure. The safeguarding policy is on the website, and this contains some useful guidance to students under 18 and their parents. However, the policy is not well signposted for the casual user of the site.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit

None.

CONCLUSIONS

Significant steps have been taken to address the concerns identified in the 2016 report in relation to publicity, academic management and care of under 18s. More work is needed to ensure that two references are collected for all new homestay hosts, and that the level of care given to under 18s is accurately and accessibly set out.

RECOMMENDATION

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

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Changes to summary statement

The need for improvement in care of under 18s can now be removed.

Summary statement

Original summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Norwich Study Centre in October 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 professional English for adults (18+) in school premises and in company, and general English for adults (16+) and for under 18s.

The inspection report noted a need for improvement in 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 Norwich Study Centre in October 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).

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