

Organisation name	Oxford English Centre
Inspection date	17 August 2018
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 2020. However, evidence must be submitted within three months to demonstrate that the weaknesses in publicity and S3 have been addressed.

### Changes to the summary statement

The need for improvement in accommodation can now be removed but a need for improvement in publicity must be added. An updated summary statement can now be issued.

### New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Oxford English Centre in August 2016 and August 2018. 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](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation) for details).

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

The inspection report noted a need for improvement in the area of publicity.

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

### Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	1986
Last full inspection	2016
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	2017
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	None
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	The Oxford House College (OHC) Group with schools in London, Oxford, Richmond and Stratford-upon-Avon
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	OHC group schools in Australia, Canada and the USA.

Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	26 teen course 26 adult course	70 teen course 74 adult course
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	14	14
Typical age range	14–17 teen 25–30 adult	14–17 teen 25–30 adult
Typical length of stay	2 weeks teen 4 weeks adult	2 weeks teen 4 weeks adult
Predominant nationalities	Spanish	French, Argentine, Omani
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	6	12
Total number of managers including academic	2	2
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	2 + 2 activity leaders	3 + 5 activity leaders

<b>Premises profile</b>	
Address of main site	66 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PR
Additional sites in use	None
Additional sites not in use	None
Sites inspected	Banbury Road

The Oxford English Centre (OEC) is located in central north Oxford in a Gothic revival four-storey house built in the 1880s. The city centre is a 15-minute walk away. The school comprises 15 classrooms of varying sizes, appropriate to group classes and one-to-one sessions. During the summer period adult students are taught on the top two floors, and teens on the ground and lower ground floors. The ground floor also houses a large open-plan office and reception area, a classroom and the library (self-study room). The lower ground floor has a classroom, a teachers' room, a small meeting room and student toilets. This floor leads on to gardens and a large terrace with a table-tennis table and both outside and covered seating areas. The Caramba café, which provides both snacks and meals, opens on to the terrace.

## **Introduction**

### **Background**

#### **To the provision**

Since 2012, the Oxford English Centre has been owned by a company based in Australia. The same company also owns the Oxford House College group of schools, based in London, Oxford, Richmond and Stratford-upon-Avon, and the SOL summer camps, as well as schools in Australia and North America.

For 2018 the OEC website (16.08.18) offers:

A summer teen programme for individuals and groups of students, based at OEC. It "combines morning supervised activities plus twenty lessons per week General English tuition in mixed nationality classes for students aged 14–17. It runs for 8 weeks in the summer. All excursions are included at weekends." Accommodation is in homestay with evening meal, and school lunch vouchers for use in the school café.

At the same period, general English classes are run for adults (16+), with homestay or a residential option.

The school also accepts closed groups of under 18s, and adults, at other times of the year, usually in January and April.

#### **To the spot check**

The committee considered the spot check report (July 2017) on the Teenage course taking place at the main school, and found that the section standard for Care of under 18s was not met and there were unsatisfactory findings in the management of the Teenage courses, and publicity.

The committee recommended that the accreditation should be placed under review, the period of review to be ended by a spot check in 2018 focusing on Care of under 18s and the junior courses.

There were, however, provisos to this recommendation, with which Oxford English Centre complied. This then is the report on the 2018 spot check referred to above.

### **Preparation**

Two inspectors were appointed. They read, among other documentation, the correspondence relating to the committee's decision to place accreditation under review, the 2016 full report and the related action plan, the 2017 spot check report, and OEC's annual declaration 2017–18. They studied the OEC website, and the SOL Camps website. They compiled a list of documentation that needed scrutiny, and a list of people to be interviewed at the school.

### **Programme and persons present**

The inspectors arrived at the school at 09.30 and left at 17.40. The morning was spent examining documentation, and the afternoon interviewing staff. No teaching was observed. At the end of the day there was brief feedback to the centre manager and the groups manager on the inspectors' findings and some of the new 2018 criteria, in particular the emergency plan (W2).

The inspectors interviewed:

- the groups manager, who started employment with the company in November 2017. He is based at head office (HO) in London, and travels to all the schools in the group, but had been seconded to OEC for the summer to support the provision there. For that period he had taken on the management of the activity leaders. He reports to the group principal and the operations manager, both based at HO.
- the centre manager (CM), who also took up his post in November 2017, when the previous post-holder left.

He is responsible for general management of the centre, including health and safety, and for students' welfare. He reports to the group principal.

- the director of studies (DoS), who, as well as his academic management remit, is also responsible for safeguarding at the school, and he shares responsibility with the CM for welfare. He has been at the school for over 20 years.
- the accommodation officer, who joined the school in February 2018. The accommodation register is common to both OEC and OHC Oxford, and the officer manages homestays, and accommodation generally, for both schools. He is supported by a staff member at HO who deals with bookings, and who is present at OEC from time to time.
- a group of three teachers who were teaching the teen course. One of the group was the senior teacher, a full-time member of staff who has also been at the school a considerable time, and has responsibility for the self-access centre, and for classroom observation of summer school staff. The other two teachers were teaching on both the adult and the teen courses.
- two activity leaders, both new to OEC in 2018, but both with experience of working with children on summer schools. At peak the school had employed five.
- a group of six students, all of whom had been at OEC for at least two weeks. Five were in homestays, and one was living with her family in Oxford.
- the leader of a group of students from northern Spain on a three-week course, who had been bringing groups to OEC for four years, and whose group was already booked for 2019.

## Findings

### Significant changes since the last inspection

#### Management

As can be seen from the details on staff above, the academic management team has been stable, as has the senior leadership team, but three central post-holders, the groups manager, the CM, and the accommodation officer were all new to the company in 2017–18.

#### Teaching and learning

The school timetable has been reorganised, so that the teen classes have their activities in the morning and are taught in the afternoon. The adult (16+) course does the reverse. There are no times when the two groups are sharing facilities.

Publicity	Need for improvement
M22 All publicity and information is accurate, and gives rise to realistic expectations about the premises, location, and the extent and availability of the services and resources.	Not met
M23 All publicity and information about the provider and the services it offers is in clear, accurate and accessible English.	Met
M24 Publicity gives clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on the courses.	Met
M25 Publicity includes clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on costs.	Met
M26 Publicity or other information made available before enrolment gives an accurate description of the level of care and support given to any students under 18.	Not met
M27 Publicity gives an accurate description of any accommodation offered.	Met
M28 Descriptions of staff qualifications are accurate.	Met
M29 Claims to accreditation are in line with Scheme requirements.	Not met

#### Comments

The website is the primary medium of publicity, but there is also a brochure (*The Oxford English Centre*) which is reproduced on the website.

M22 The terminology used on both the website and the brochure is confusing. The summer course for 14–17 year-olds is variously referred to as a Junior Summer Programme and a Summer Teen Programme, so the reader might infer that two programmes exist. This is particularly misleading in the context of the SOL Camp provision at Wychwood School for 11–13 year-olds, which is unaccredited provision. There is nothing in the current publicity to link these two. However, there is still out-of-date publicity on the internet: if SOL Camps Oxford is entered into a search engine the fifth entry that appears is 'Summer Junior Programme – Oxford English Centre' and the entry goes on to describe the course for 11–13 year-olds 'through our partner company' for last year, August 2017.

In addition, there are three errors in the "10 interesting facts about Oxford" on page three of the brochure. And the back page of the brochure states "City centre location" for OEC, though its copy on page four contradicts: "OEC is still only 15 minutes' walk to Oxford's historic centre".

M25 On the website 2017 prices come up before the 2018 information, in a different format.

M26 This is not explicit on the website, although the link to the Student Handbook does deal with matters relating to

16 and 17 year-olds on adult courses. The issue is that the information available does not make a clear distinction between the latter students and students on the teen course, for whom very different rules apply. This is well illustrated by the parental consent form (see S3).

M29 Although the 2018 brochure uses the correct Accreditation Scheme marque, this marque is not consistently used on the website, or on internal publications such as the student handbook.

Safeguarding under 18s	Met
S1 There is a safeguarding policy which specifies procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students under the age of 18. A named member of staff is responsible for implementing this policy and responding to child protection allegations.	Met
S2 The provider makes the policy known to all adults in contact with under 18s through their role with the organisation, and provides guidance or training relevant to its effective implementation.	Met
S3 The provider has written parental/guardian consent reflecting the level of care and support given to students under 18, including medical consent.	Not met
S4 Recruitment procedures for all roles involving responsibility for or substantial access to under 18s are in line with safer recruitment good practice and the organisation's safeguarding policy.	Met
S5 There are suitable arrangements for the supervision and safety of students during scheduled lessons and activities.	Met
S6 There are suitable arrangements for the supervision and safety of students outside the scheduled programme.	Met
S7 There are suitable arrangements for the accommodation of students.	Met
S8 There are suitable arrangements to ensure contact between the provider and parents, legal guardians or their nominated representatives concerning the welfare of students.	Met

#### Comments

At the inspection there were 26 under 18s enrolled on the teen course, and five on the adult course. At peak in July there were 70 under 18s enrolled on the teen course, and 14 on the adult course.

S1 Although the safeguarding policy has been updated to include the fact that all adults in a homestay need to be DBS checked, some of the other internal documents such as the guidance notes for parents/guardians and the teachers' handbook have not been.

S3 OEC has a parental consent form for under 18s, but it needs complete review, as the level of care provided is unclear. Most importantly, it includes information for both 16 and 17 year-olds attending an adult course and those 14–17 year-olds attending the teen summer provision, so it presents contradictory information, which is most confusing for the reader. Secondly, it includes information on such things as the airport transfer service, which dilutes the message about parental consent. Thirdly, the final paragraph before the signature only requires the parent/guardian to give consent to their child 'travelling to and within the UK independently', completely ignoring the other consents required.

#### 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.*

##### Management

M6 (2018: M10) One teacher's file contained copies of qualifications that had not been endorsed. One teacher had only one reference on file.

**Addressed. All files checked contained two references, and all qualifications had been endorsed.**

M7 (2018: M11) The new centre manager had no induction or handover with the previous principal.

**Addressed. The new centre manager appointed in November 2017 had an induction.**

M22 (2018: M22) The website says that the summer teens programme is run at Wychwood School but the programme is being run at the Oxford school in 2017. The picture and message from the principal is out of date, since a new centre manager was appointed in April 2017.

**Addressed. The current website makes no mention of Wychwood school. There is no message from the principal or centre manager in current publicity. (However, see M22 in the Publicity section above.)**

M24 (2018: M24) On the website the age range for the teens programme is given as 14–17. In Oxford there was one 12 year-old, seven 13 year-olds and one 18 year-old in the teens classes. The course length is given as one to six weeks on the website but one to ten weeks on the downloadable fact sheet. The maximum class size is given as 14 but one of the teens classes had 15 students and one had 16 students at the time of the spot check.

**Addressed. The ages of students enrolled were checked, and all were within the advertised 14–17 age range. Publicity now clearly states that students must be 14 or 17 by the start date of the course.**

M29 (2018: M29) The summer junior programme run at Wychwood School was advertised on the Oxford English Centre website (checked 18.07.17), and the Accreditation Scheme marque was at the foot of the page, giving the

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clear impression that the summer junior programme was part of the accredited provision.

**Addressed: The programme run at Wychwood school is not advertised on the OEC website. (However, see M22 in the Publicity section above.)**

### Teaching and learning

T11 (2018: T10) No observations of the teachers working on the summer teens programme had taken place. One newly qualified teacher was teaching in week three of the programme and had had no feedback or guidance on his teaching.

**Partially addressed: All teachers working on the summer teen programme had been observed by the senior teacher, who is TEFLQ, in the first week of the course, and had received oral and written feedback.**

**However, these observations were 'pop ins', and no further observations had been undertaken to follow up points made in the feedback.**

### Welfare and student services

W1 (2018: W1) Students on the teens courses are required to wear lanyards as ID but three were seen without them in the course of the afternoon. No fire drills had taken place since the teens courses had started. In one teens' classroom a student was allowed to sit in front of a fire exit, despite the 'keep clear' sign.

**Addressed: All students are required to wear lanyards, with different colours indicating over and under 16s. No students were observed without them. Fire drills had taken place in early May, July and August. All fire exits were clear.**

W12 (2018: W11) Two of the five homestay records sampled did not have copies of Gas Safe certificates and one did not have a fire risk assessment on file.

**Addressed: Five homestay records were sampled, and all had Gas Safe certificates and fire risk assessments on file. However, one homestay had not been revisited within the two-year time frame.**

W16 (2018: W16) In one homestay there were five students, three from a Spanish-speaking group, one Russian and one Brazilian.

**Addressed: No more than four students were accommodated in any homestays.**

### Care of under 18s

C3 (2018: M26) There is no information about any different levels of care available to under 18s on the summer teens and junior programmes.

**Partially addressed: There is plenty of information, in handbooks and in official documents, about the level of care for the teen course, but it is not always presented in such a way as to make it easily accessible to the reader. In some documents curfew times vary.**

C4 (2018: S4) The information confirming whether all adults in homestays hosting students on the teens programme are DBS checked was not easily available and there was insufficient time during the spot check to check further.

**Addressed: Information in the form of the DBS number is clearly recorded for each homestay. All hosts are asked to tick Box 66 to ensure all adults in homestays are DBS checked. Checks are only accepted if they are less than three months' old.**

C5 (2018: S5) The teens courses were running in the adult school with insufficient separation of juniors and adults at lunchtime and afternoon breaks, and no evidence of effective supervision of the juniors at these times. The intermediate class had an 18 year-old student placed with students aged under 16. A 14 year-old student had been placed in error in a class of adults with an age range of 16–60.

**Addressed: Teens meet to disperse for morning activities after the adult course has started, and they do not overlap at lunch and break times. Teens and adults are taught on different floors of the building. Outside the classroom they are supervised by the CM, the groups manager and the accommodation officer, whose rotas were checked, and by the activity leaders and the group leader prior to and during activities. All students had been placed in appropriate classes within the correct age range.**

C6 (2018: S6) There was no supervision, and no system of signing in and out, for those students who chose to collect their lunch from a café further along Banbury Road. One of the teens' student records sampled had no parental consent form on file.

**Addressed: All students under 18, on the teen or adult course, sign in in the morning and at lunch time, and out in the afternoon. All students on the teen course have their lunch at the school café. All the student records sampled had parental consent forms.**

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## Conclusions

The points to be addressed relating to publicity and links to another unaccredited provider have been dealt with on the current website (barring the rogue historic internet entry). There are a few minor inaccuracies in the publicity, information about the level of care for under 18s is unclear, and the wrong version of the Accreditation Scheme marque is used on some of the material.

OEC has dealt with the vast majority of issues relating to the safeguarding of under 18s. The inspectors have no concerns about the safety and security of students aged under 18 on the school site, in homestay or during

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activities. All internal publications, however, need updating to reflect current practice in this area, and the parental consent form requires complete review.

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