Organisation name | Robertson Languages International, Twyford
---|---
Inspection date | 8 November 2016

**BACKGROUND**

**Organisation profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection history</th>
<th>Dates/details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First inspection</td>
<td>September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last full inspection</td>
<td>October/November 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent spot check (if applicable)</td>
<td>N/a</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>
<tr>
<td>Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre</td>
<td>Translation services, foreign language training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Current accreditation status and reason for spot check**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current accredited status</th>
<th>Accredited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for spot check</td>
<td>Signalled: follow up on Points to be addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Premises profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address of main site</th>
<th>57–59 High Street, Twyford, Berkshire RG10 9AJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection</td>
<td>N/a</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>57–59 High Street, Twyford, Berkshire RG10 9AJ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student and staff profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)</th>
<th>At inspection</th>
<th>In peak week November</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical age range</td>
<td>25–60</td>
<td>25–60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical length of stay</td>
<td>3–6 months</td>
<td>3–6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant nationalities</td>
<td>Italian, French, Belgian, Polish</td>
<td>Italian, French, Belgian, Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of administrative/ancillary staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Background

Robertson Languages International offers translation services and training courses in English and other languages for corporate clients. English courses are offered in the UK and overseas. The UK courses are held in the client's office or home and occasionally at the head office in Twyford. Some courses form part of a relocation package for employees and their families. Nearly all courses are taught one-to-one, although sometimes intensive courses for groups are arranged. Most students enrol for a specific number of lessons delivered over an extended period, with lessons typically taking place once a week for one or two hours at times convenient for the student. Teachers are employed on freelance contracts.

Nearly all students are adults, although under 18s are sometimes taught as part of a family relocation package for corporate clients. Under 18s are always taught at the parental home.

During the week of the inspection four one-to-one courses were being held at four locations in central and outer London. A group of nine students was being taught in Slough. Five teachers were employed to teach these courses. A two-day intensive course in Wokingham was scheduled for the following week and a new teacher had been recruited to deliver this programme.

The last full inspection was held in October/November 2015. Accreditation was placed under review because the section standard for Care of under 18s was not met and weaknesses in other areas were identified. The school was required to provide evidence within six months that these points had been addressed. The school provided the required evidence and in July 2016 the period of review was ended as the section standard for Care of under 18s was found to be met. An updated report was issued. However, points to be addressed under M8, M9, T10 and T11 had not been fully addressed. The school was informed that a spot check would take place within six months focusing on these issues.

Preparation

The inspector received copies of the 2015 report, the most recent Annual declaration and some subsequent correspondence between the Accreditation Unit and the school. A copy of the updated report issued in July 2016 was provided by the school. The inspector contacted the school a few days before the inspection to check availability of staff but did not inform the school of the date of the visit.

Programme and persons present

One inspector carried out the spot check, arriving at the school's head office in Twyford at 10.00 and leaving at 14.15. The inspector toured the premises and met the part-time school administrator briefly. Meetings were held with the training manager and the training director.

FINDINGS

There have been no substantial changes in the provision since the last inspection in October/November 2015. The school continues to offer English and foreign language classes for corporate clients and translation services. The well-established management team is unchanged.

The head office premises were not checked in detail. They offer a welcoming and professional working environment for students and staff. Most lessons are taught off-site in clients' offices or homes. No students were being taught at the head office at the time of the inspection.

The focus of the inspection was on reviewing action taken in response to points to be addressed arising from the last inspection. Comments on the relevant criteria are in the following section of this report.

The publicity was also reviewed as there were several points to be addressed arising from the last inspection. Comments on the relevant criteria are included in the following section of the report. The website, which is the principal medium of publicity, contains accurate information about the school and its services. However, the brochures include some unsubstantiated claims and inaccurate information.
**POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED**

Points to be addressed from the previous inspection report 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.

Comments in standard type are from the 2015 report.
Comments in italics are from the updated 2015 report issued in July 2016.
Comments in bold relate to this spot check.

**Points which must be addressed within six months**

**Management**

M8 For teachers who are not observed, monitoring of their performance is reliant on client feedback and records submitted by the teachers. There are no formal appraisal procedures for teachers. *There is a new policy regarding the monitoring of teachers’ performance. This states that observations are conducted after 120 hours of teaching (see T10/T11). There is now an appraisal policy in place for teachers, but no evidence of completed appraisals was submitted.*

**Addressed.** All teachers are now observed by the training manager after 80 hours of teaching, although observations may take place earlier if the course is shorter or if any negative feedback is received from clients. Observation records were sampled and found to be detailed and constructive. There is a clear focus on providing practical suggestions to improve the standard of teaching. All teachers observed complete a personal reflection form in which they evaluate their own performance. Of the five teachers employed at the time of the inspection, one had been observed four times, three had been observed twice and one had been observed once. In one case, a teacher was observed online. A teacher recruited to teach on a two-day intensive course next week will be observed on the second day of the course. The school continues to monitor teachers’ performance through regular client feedback and teachers’ lesson records. All teachers are on freelance contracts. Teachers are not formally appraised. However, the school ensures that teachers receive copies of student feedback. There was also evidence that the training manager discusses with teachers any significant issues arising from feedback.

M9 Some of the procedures outlined in the CPD policy, such as the provision of seminars/workshops, observation of lessons and teacher-recording of their own CPD on the organisation’s intranet, have not been fully implemented for the benefit of all teachers, particularly those who live at some distance from the HO. *No evidence that this policy has changed. A spreadsheet was submitted but very few of the teachers have attended seminars presented by the organisation.*

**Addressed.** The school has offered more seminar workshops and attendance has improved, although it is difficult for some teachers to attend sessions in Twyford. In June 2016 five teachers attended a session on language games, teaching young learners and grammar teaching. In July 2016 eight teachers attended a workshop on use of the IPA phonemic chart. Attendance at training workshops is encouraged, but is not obligatory. Of the five teachers employed at the school at the time of the spot check, one had attended three training sessions, two had attended two sessions and one had attended one session since their employment began. One recently appointed teacher had not attended any sessions.

M16 Two of the points from the first inspection and subsequent spot check remain unaddressed. At the first inspection inspectors stated that trainers based away from the school would benefit from more support. At the spot check the organisation stated that they planned to introduce a programme of quarterly INSET seminars at HO and to launch a parallel series of webinars. There has been one seminar offered on two dates this year and none last year. There have been no webinars.

At the first inspection inspectors commented that trainers not local to the school have yet to be observed. At the spot check plans had been drawn up for trainers working on more distant locations. At the time of this inspection teachers based outside the local area or London had not been observed. Online observations had not been introduced.

*One online observation has been conducted since the inspection.*

There is no action plan to address these points.

*The provider is still working to find an effective solution to address these points.*

**Partially addressed.** Teachers have been offered more training sessions. Two sessions have been offered this year and the policy is to offer two sessions per year in future. The level of participation has improved. The planned webinars have not yet been introduced. The teacher observation programme is more rigorous; all currently employed teachers have been formally observed. See comment under M8.

**Teaching and learning**

T10 Procedures do not always effectively ensure appropriate support and guidance for all teachers.

Two seminars are planned for June and July. The CPD records show that very few teachers attend these sessions. Some teachers have still not been observed.

**Addressed.** Two training sessions took place in June and July, attended by five and eight teachers respectively. All teachers have been observed.
Three teachers had not been observed but had been working for the organisation for between two and five years. Monitoring of teachers who live further afield is reliant on student feedback and feedback given by the teachers.

The policy is now that observations should be conducted after 120 hours’ teaching. The evidence submitted regarding the teachers currently teaching state the hours that they have worked for RLI but does not indicate the dates, types or number of courses. There is no evidence that teachers with less experience or teaching different courses are monitored closely. Two of the teachers working at the time of the inspection have still not been observed.

Addressed. Observations now take place after 80 hours of teaching, although observations may take place earlier if the course is shorter or if any negative feedback is received from clients. All teachers have been observed.

Other points to be addressed

Management
M6 Qualifications are generally carefully verified. In one case, copies of certificates had been accepted but the originals had not been seen.

Addressed. Staff records were sampled. Copies of certificates were signed to confirm that originals had been seen.

M22 Some of the claims made in publicity are not substantiated e.g. ‘You can count on us for the best quality language and culture training anywhere in the world’. Some statements are misleading, for example, that teachers use ‘our proven resources and teaching materials which are developed in house’. The content of the majority of courses is based on a published coursebook.

Addressed. The school’s principal medium of publicity is its website. Unsubstantiated and potentially misleading claims have been removed from the website.

M28 Publicity states that ‘We have the most capable and qualified trainers you will find anywhere in the world’ and that teachers are ‘experienced’. None of the teachers deployed at the time of the inspection were qualified to diploma level and some had had very little experience of ELT before teaching for the organisation.

Partially addressed. There are now no misleading or inaccurate statements about the teachers on the website. However, a statement in the brochure that ‘clients benefit from the very latest and very best teaching standards’ would be difficult to substantiate.

M29 Publicity states that the organisation is accredited by Business English UK.

Partially addressed. The reference to Business English UK is now accurately stated on the website. However, in the brochure there are two inaccurate statements relating to accreditation by the British Council: ‘Our Training Centre in Twyford is highly acclaimed by the British Council.’ and ‘We can provide accommodation with our carefully selected, local home-stay providers, who are all described as excellent by the British Council…’.

Resources and environment
R7 There is a very limited selection of coursebooks or supplementary materials for young learners.

Not yet addressed. The provision has not changed substantially since the last inspection.

R8 There are very few methodology books on one-to-one teaching or teaching young learners.

Not yet addressed. The provision has not changed substantially since the last inspection.

Teaching and learning
T2 One teacher did not have an appropriate ELT qualification.

Addressed. All teachers employed at the time of the inspection were suitably qualified.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit

None.

CONCLUSIONS

The school continues to be managed effectively to the benefit of both students and staff. The training director and the training manager form a strong management team at head office. Robust administration systems are in place to devise and deliver suitable training programmes for the school’s corporate clients and to recruit and monitor teachers. The specific concerns identified at the time of the review of the school’s accreditation status in July 2016 have largely been addressed. All teachers are now observed and appropriate support is provided by the training manager. The school has succeeded in increasing staff participation in training sessions. However, more sessions could be offered and the school’s plans to provide training through webinars need to be implemented as soon as possible. There are some weaknesses in the school’s publicity.
RECOMMENDATION

The next inspection falls due in 2019; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Changes to summary statement

No changes need to be made to the summary statement.

Summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Robertson Languages International in October and November 2015. 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 small private language school offers courses in general and professional English for adults and under 18s in school premises and in-company.

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