

Organisation name	SKOLA English in Exeter
Inspection date	1 June 2017

**BACKGROUND**
**Organisation profile**

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	1991
Last full inspection	2015
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	2016
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	N/a
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: inspect new or additional premises Signalled: monitor effect of change of provision

**Premises profile**

Address of main site	89A Queen Street, Exeter EX4 3RP
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	St Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU
Sites inspected	The school occupies the top three floors of a building on a main street in the centre of Exeter. The entrance is to the side of a café that uses the ground floor and basement. Steps from the street lead to the first floor and the open plan reception area and student common room. The school manager and administrator and accommodation officer work in the reception area. A total of six classrooms are spread over the top three floors, together with an office, a kitchen area, which staff and students can use, a teachers' room, where the academic manager works, and separate male and female toilets.

**Student and staff profile**

	At inspection	In peak week July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	14	60
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	16	11
Typical age range	18–25	18–25
Typical length of stay	10 weeks	2 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Italian, Saudi Arabian	Saudi Arabian, Spanish, Italian

Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	3	10
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	4	4

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

This was a spot check prompted by a change in ownership, as well as a change in premises.

Following a number of changes in the last three years, the school is now co-owned and directed by the principal and the school manager, with a 60/40 division of ownership. Both have been with the school for many years; the principal for over twenty, the school manager for nine. The company name and type remains the same, i.e. it is a private limited company (Marble Arch International Schools), with company number: 1396224

In April 2017 the school moved from the premises it had previously occupied in Longbrook Street into the current premises on Queen Street. The new premises are a ten minutes' walk from the old, and the move was completed over a weekend, with no disruption to school activities.

### Preparation

One inspector carried out the inspection. She had not been involved in either the full inspection of 2015 or the spot check of the new junior course in 2016. The inspector contacted the school to check if there were any dates that would not be suitable. The Accreditation Unit sent the 2016–2017 printed brochure and other relevant documents. The inspector looked at the English in Exeter website.

### Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 10.00 and left at 14.00. She had meetings with the director/principal, the director/school manager and the administrator and accommodation officer. The academic manager was on holiday. The inspector had separate meetings with the teachers and with some students. There was no formal observation of lessons, but the inspector observed the classes in action to see how the premises were used. Relevant documents were provided for the inspector, as well as a link to the new website.

## FINDINGS

### Change of premises

The new premises are very central, with many cafés, shops and restaurants in the immediate vicinity. The school occupies the top three floors of a four-storey building. Staff and students commented that it felt more like a city-centre language school than their previous premises, a converted house, and that they liked this change. Staff and students also commented on the smooth transition from one school building to the next, with lessons finishing on a Friday in one building and starting on the Monday in the next. Teachers had been shown the building and the layout a few weeks before the move and had created whole-school activities to introduce the students to their new neighbourhood. The students had particularly enjoyed these activities.

New risk assessments for the building have been prepared, as well as relevant health and safety and fire procedures, and fire drills have been carried out. There is currently one fire exit route and the staircases are narrow. An existing second staircase is currently blocked but would provide a useful additional exit route. A buzzer entry system is in place, but not used. Management are exploring different options to ensure entry can be adequately monitored, especially at busy times. (W1)

### Changes to ownership and management structure

The current owners have both worked in the school for many years, which means that the change in ownership is not apparent in the day-to-day running of the school. The SKOLA name is prominently displayed on posters throughout the building, reinforcing a sense of continuity. An agreement has been reached with SKOLA to continue to use their branding until 2018, after which a decision will be made as to whether to retain it or not. Scrutiny of documentation revealed the need to update the organogram and the job descriptions of the two director/owners. (M2, M3)

### Publicity

There are currently two websites; one specifically for SKOLA English in Exeter, another where SKOLA English in Exeter is shown as part of the SKOLA group. Information about the group needs updating on the new website. (M22)

## Premises and facilities

Criteria	Not met	Met	Strength	See comments	N/a
R1 Adequate space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
R2 Condition of premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
R3 Classrooms and learning areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
R4 Student relaxation areas and food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R5 Signage and display	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R6 Staffroom(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Comments

R1 The school provides adequate space for staff and students. Staircases are narrow, but adequate for the number of students, and the small landing areas and kitchen provide extra space for students to congregate.

R2 The school is bright and light and in a satisfactory state of cleanliness. Overall it was in a good state of repair, with the exception of one door which needs repairing.

R3 Five of the six classrooms accommodate the stated maximum. All provide good natural light and ventilation and are surprisingly quiet, given their central location.

R4 The student lounge on the first floor is an open-plan space with tables and brightly coloured chairs where students may eat their lunch. They are able to heat up meals in the school kitchen but there is also a wide variety of cafés and snack bars within the immediate vicinity.

R5 Signage and display is minimal at the moment, but adequate.

R6 The staffroom has sufficient space for teachers to work and socialise at quiet times. When the school is busy, teachers will prepare their lessons in classrooms. Teachers were positive about their facilities and appreciated having a room that was close to the students.

### 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.*

### Management

M18 Action arising from initial student feedback is taken but is not always recorded.

**Not yet addressed.**

M25 The approximate cost of fees for the IELTS examination is not given.

**Not yet addressed.**

### Resources and environment

R7 The material in the teachers' room would benefit from 'weeding' and clearer labelling so that it is accessible to new teachers.

**Partially addressed. Material has been 'weeded' out during the move, but clearer labelling and organisation is still needed.**

### Welfare and student services

W4 The 'Anti-harassment code' on noticeboards and the section on behaviour in the *Student notebook* are presented in unnecessarily complicated language.

**Partially addressed. The code has been simplified, but one paragraph still remains unnecessarily complicated.**

W9 One of the hosts visited was unaware of the need to change bed linen every week.

**Addressed. The homestay provider was contacted. The duties, including a weekly change of bed linen, are clearly outlined in the 'Homestay Code of Practice'.**

W13 Confirmation to students does not indicate the approximate travel time between accommodation and the teaching premises.

**Addressed. Details about the homestay provider give the student information about their provider, including how to get to the school and approximate travel time.**

### Care of under 18s

C4 Suitability checks for the senior managers had not been carried out in the last three years. In homestays only the main care-giver is checked.

**Addressed. Documentation was provided to the Accreditation Unit and accepted in March 2017.**

C6 One student had travelled to the homestay with her room-mate after an evening activity, rather than being collected by her homestay host. Students have limited free time, but rules do not specify clearly what they are

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allowed to do, and there is no sliding scale according to age. The guide for hosts hosting under 18s does not make it clear whether the vacation course students are allowed to go out unaccompanied.

**Addressed. Documentation was provided to the Accreditation Unit and accepted in March 2017.**

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### **Points to be addressed arising from this visit**

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#### **Management**

M2 The organogram is out of date.

M3 The job descriptions of the principal and school manager do not contain reference to their new responsibilities as owners/directors. There is no reference to safeguarding responsibilities in the school manager's job description.

M23 Information about the SKOLA group needs updating on the new website.

#### **Resources and environment**

R1 A second fire exit route is currently blocked so not operational.

R2 One door needs repairing.

#### **Care of students**

W1 A secure entry system is not yet in place. A second fire exit route is currently blocked.

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## **CONCLUSIONS**

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The new premises provide an appropriate city-centre environment for staff and students. The move was handled efficiently and imaginatively and staff and students reported enjoying their new location.

The change in ownership has had no discernible effect on staff or students or the day-to-day running of the school. Some documentation and certain aspects of publicity need to be altered to give an accurate description of the current status of the school.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

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The next inspection falls due in 2019; there are no grounds for bringing this forward. However, an action plan should be submitted within three months to show how the issues identified under W1, M2 and M3 are being addressed.

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## **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

### **Changes to summary statement**

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No changes need to be made to the summary statement.

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### **Summary statement**

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The British Council inspected and accredited Skola English in Exeter in February 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](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation) for details).

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

Strengths were noted in the areas of staff management, academic staff profile, academic management, teaching, care of students, and leisure opportunities.

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

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