

Organisation name	St Albans School of Languages
Inspection date	2 November 2017

BACKGROUND
Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2007
Last full inspection	June 2017
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	November 2017
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	Italian evening classes
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	35 Market Place St Albans Herts AL3 5DL
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	The school occupies the first and second floors of a listed building in the centre of St Albans. There are four classrooms, an office/reception/teachers room, a kitchen and toilets. Other rooms on the first floor are currently let to a therapy group practice. One male toilet is shared with them.

Student and staff profile

	At inspection	In peak week November
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	84	84
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	17	17
Typical age range	19–30	19–30
Typical length of stay	6 months	6 months
Predominant nationalities	Spanish and French	Spanish and French
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	3	6
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	1–2	1–2

INTRODUCTION

Background

St Albans School of Languages was founded by the director in 2004. The premises are rented from the local council on a renewable five-year lease expiring in 2018. There is no reason to believe that the lease will not be renewed.

The majority of students attend the school on a part-time basis and live in and around St Albans; many work in local businesses or as au-pairs. Three-hour general English classes are run each morning. Part-time students can choose to attend on two or three mornings a week. Full-time students attend every morning. Exam classes take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursday evenings.

The school had a full inspection in June 2017. The inspection report asked that evidence be submitted within three months to demonstrate that weaknesses in R1, W1, W12, C1 and C5 had been addressed.

Preparation

The inspector was sent a copy of the British Council inspection report dated June 2017 together with a printout from the website giving details of the courses on offer. The full website was examined before the visit. The school was not contacted before the spot check.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 09.45 and departed at 13.45. Meetings were held with the director and the academic manager (AM) and a group of students during their break. Teachers were spoken to informally. Documents, including staff files and student feedback forms were examined. The inspector had a tour of the premises.

FINDINGS

The management structure and staffing remains the same. The director is in charge of the day-to-day administration of the school, which includes student enrolment procedures and student induction. The academic manager remains in post as does the company director. There is a core of teachers who are used on a regular but flexible basis depending on student numbers and teachers' own availability. There is substantial informal contact on a daily basis between all staff including the company director, who works away from the school most days, but is easily contactable by phone. This was demonstrated during the spot check.

The last full inspection report had highlighted some areas where the inspectors were concerned for the safety of students and in particular students under the age of 18. The main focus on the spot check was on the points to be addressed within three months.

Minimum age is advertised as 16. There are however very few students under the age of 18 who enrol in the school. At the time of the last full inspection in June 2017, there were two full-time students and one part-time student aged under 18. At the time of the spot check there was one student (female) under 18 enrolled in the school.

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 which must be addressed within three months

Resources and environment

R1 The only male toilet, a single cubicle, is shared with the other tenants in the building. This is not a satisfactory provision.

Addressed. Clients to the therapy clinic are escorted from the front door to the clinic by therapy staff. The male toilet cubicle, which is also used by therapy staff and their clients is lockable. The female toilet with two cubicles on the second floor has been designated gender neutral with an appropriate sign showing this. Students in the focus group meeting were satisfied with the facilities.

Welfare and student services

W1 Some risks had either not been identified or, if identified, not adequately assessed and so steps had not been taken to deal with these issues.

Partially addressed. Outstanding issues have not been specified in this PTBA. Fire risk assessments were completed during the inspection. The director explained that a number of improvements had been made based on comments made by the inspectors during the inspection and these are described elsewhere in this report. The inspectors had been concerned with the quality of a fire door. The landlord (the local

council) has fitted a new strong door spring and new surrounds in order to strengthen the fire door.

W12 There is no evidence to show that fire risk assessments have been completed.

Addressed. There are currently only three hosts on the register; fire risk assessments for these homes are in order.

Care of under 18s

C1 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) works offsite for four days of the week and there is no-one onsite able to cover if she cannot attend.

Addressed. The director has undergone the appropriate training and completed Advanced Safeguarding for Designated Staff.

C5 Risks associated with sharing the premises with another business and having a single male toilet cubicle had not been identified or dealt with.

Addressed. See R1 above

Other points to be addressed

Management

M3 Some of the job descriptions are not dated and there is no evidence of regular review.

Addressed. Job descriptions for all employees have been reviewed and dated and are linked to the appraisals that follow the lesson observations carried out by the academic manager. The director appraises the academic manager. Teachers carry out self-evaluations.

M5 Not all procedures which are followed are included in the recruitment policy.

Addressed. It was not clear to school staff what was meant by this point to be addressed. The school's recruitment policy is fully in line with safer recruitment procedures. Prospective employees have to produce an appropriate proof of identity, provide references, originals of qualifications and a CV with any gaps explained. A DBS check must be completed and prospective employees must also expect to undergo safeguarding and prevent training.

M8 There is no formal review of overall performance outside the classroom or appraisal system in place for non-teaching roles.

Addressed. The director and the company director have the only non-teaching roles in the school. At present there does not appear to be a need for an appraisal system for these two members of staff. If school expansion demands additional administrative staff, an appraisal system will be put in place.

M12 It is not always clear from the registers produced at the beginning of the week, the days which students are going to attend.

Addressed. As the school prides itself on offering an unusually high degree of flexibility and the majority of students are au-pairs who have to respond to their families' needs, students are able to attend as and when they can. This allows these students the possibility to attend classes which otherwise they might not if they had to enrol for a definitive course. Registers are meticulously kept as students only pay for lessons attended.

M21 Some of the language used is complex and the text is rather dense in places, which can make information hard to access.

Not yet addressed.

M26 Homestay providers are currently referred to as 'families', but this is not always the case.

Addressed. There is no mention of 'families' on the website.

Resources and environment

R2 Some areas would benefit from redecoration. Many of the original sash windows need new locks or sash cords fitted.

Partially addressed. Some refurbishment has taken place. The inspectors were concerned that accidents could happen during 'horseplay' in the school if windows were open. Restrictors have been installed on the windows.

R3 The furniture in some of the classrooms cannot easily be moved and the arrangement does not always suit the requirements of the class or lesson.

Not yet addressed. The existing furniture is good quality and very sturdy.

R8 Teachers do not have a personal copy of the teachers book and the CLA copying allowance may be exceeded because teachers photocopy the relevant pages to take home.

Addressed. There are enough copies of the various teachers' books for all the levels taught at the school and teachers are more than welcome to take the books home.

Teaching and learning

T9 There are no set procedures or specific guidance for new teachers for dealing with this type of continuous enrolment.

Addressed. There are explicit notes of advice for teachers on how to deal with the enrolment structure and student attendance. Continuous personal development sessions (CPD) have taken place focusing on just this point.

T12 The two class teachers liaise in planning for the week ahead, but there is limited guidance for teachers on how to manage this and no schemes of work for them to refer to.

Addressed. Each lesson is a standalone lesson. Teachers are familiar with this approach having received guidance through CPD and brief but clear written guidelines. Teachers liaise closely and each teacher must record a lesson summary in the back of the register. This should also include materials used. This was noted during the spot check.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit

None

CONCLUSIONS

The school meets Scheme standards. Most of the points to be addressed have received the required attention. The school continues to function professionally and provide a good quality service to the students.

RECOMMENDATION

The next inspection falls due in 2021; 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 St Albans School of Languages in June 2017. 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 adults (16+).

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