

Organisation name	St Giles International, Cambridge
Inspection date	7 February 2019
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: to monitor the provision after a full inspection which took place in March 2018 shortly following a change of ownership

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation. The next inspection falls due in 2022; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

Changes to the summary statement

Vacation courses for under 16s can be added.
Areas of strength can be added for student administration, and premises and facilities.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited St Giles International, Cambridge in March 2018 and February 2019. 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 for details).

This private language school offers courses in general and professional English for adults (18+) and young people (16+), for closed groups of adults (18+) and young people (16+), and vacation courses for under 16s.

Strengths were noted in the areas of student administration, premises and facilities, learner management, and teaching.

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

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	1985 as New School of English
Last full inspection	March 2018 as St Giles International, Cambridge
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	N/a
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	St Giles has four other year-round accredited centres in the UK: in Brighton, Eastbourne, and two in London.
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	The St Giles group has schools in the USA and Canada, with seasonal schools for juniors throughout these countries, and an affiliated school in Brazil.

Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	80	130

Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	16	16 (14 in 2019)
Typical age range	20–25	20–25
Typical length of stay	4 weeks	4 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Swiss, Colombian	Turkish, Colombian
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	9	13
Total number of managers including academic	2	2
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	5 (some part-time)	5 (some part-time)

Premises profile	
Address of main site	52 Bateman Street, Cambridge CB2 1LR
Additional sites in use	None
Additional sites not in use	The Courtyard, George IV Street, Cambridge CB2 1HH (known as the annexe) used during peak months of June–August, three extra classrooms
Sites inspected	52 Bateman Street, Cambridge CB2 1LR The Courtyard, George IV Street, Cambridge CB2 1HH

Introduction

Background

St Giles purchased a former accredited school of English in June 2017. The school continued to trade under its former name until it was rebranded as St Giles International, Cambridge in January 2018. A full inspection of the school took place in March 2018. The inspection report noted that since the change of ownership there had been several management, academic and welfare staff changes. It was also noted that major refurbishment of the main site had been undertaken and that some of the work was still on-going at the time of the inspection. The resulting recommendation was for continuing accreditation. However, because of the very recent change in ownership a spot check was recommended within six to 12 months to focus on the consolidation of St Giles' methods and practices.

General English courses are run including examination preparation classes (IELTS and externally validated English examinations). Four levels from pre-intermediate to advanced were running during the inspection week. During the last 12 months, English for Business courses have been run in the afternoons; these are usually combined with a morning general English course. Students can also combine one-to-one classes in the afternoon with a morning programme. At the time of the spot check inspection there was a closed group of 27 Swiss students.

The minimum age for the adult courses is 16 and at the time of this inspection there were six students aged under 18 in the school attending adult courses. Starting in April 2019, it is planned to accept students aged 14 and 15 on junior courses for set periods during Easter and summer holidays. The school staff are aware of the implications of having this younger age group in the school.

This inspection focused on aspects of the provision which were still undergoing development or which had not been fully completed at the time of the full inspection: notably those relating to student administration, premises and facilities and care of students. Also publicity, which had a number of points to be addressed following the 2018 inspection, was scrutinised in detail. See below.

Preparation

This was a scheduled spot check. The inspector received the 2018 report and relevant documentation from the Accreditation Unit; she contacted the school a week before the inspection to check student numbers and the availability of members of management staff during the following four weeks. The exact date of the inspection was not given.

Programme and persons present

The spot check inspection was conducted by one inspector over half a day. She arrived at the school at 08.40 and departed at 12.40. Meetings were held with the principal, the DoS, the registrar, the accommodation officer and the finance officer. Short meetings were also held with the teachers (one of whom is the leisure officer) and a representative group of students (including students aged under 18). The premises of the main school and those of the annexe were inspected and documentation provided by the school was scrutinised.

Findings

Significant changes since the last inspection

Management

The management structure is clear, with effective lines of communication having been established within the school and the wider organisation. The school now benefits from the implementation of group-wide policies: for example, those for staff monitoring. Student administration is carried out sensitively and efficiently by a newly formed team which consists of a registrar, an accommodation officer, a student services officer, a finance officer, and a social organiser (who also teaches). Publicity material is now fully up to date and compliant.

Premises and resources

Since the full inspection the refurbishment work in the main school and the annexe has been completed to a high standard, providing staff and students with a comfortable environment for effective work, study and relaxation.

Teaching and learning

The current DoS was appointed to her role in April 2018, shortly after the full inspection. She was formerly a teacher at the NSoE, is suitably qualified and has previous experience of the DoS role. She reported that she and the school have benefited from being part of the St Giles group. Teachers feel that they are well supported; all have been observed, and had appraisals (when appropriate), within the last nine months.

Welfare and student services

The provision continues to be appropriate, delivered principally by a team of four (replacing the welfare officer): the student services officer, accommodation officer, registrar, and leisure officer. Accommodation systems have been improved and all homestays have been visited within the last 12 months. The leisure programme has been expanded; it caters for all ages including under 18s, and is popular with students.

Safeguarding under 18s

The provision continues to be appropriate. Additional training has been conducted for recent members of staff. Consideration has been given to the implications of accepting under 16s: for example, the principal has been in touch with the local authority about any necessary arrangements for private fostering.

Student administration	Area of strength
M14 Staff are helpful and courteous to students and their representatives, and provide satisfactory levels of customer service.	Strength
M15 Students or their representatives receive sufficient information and advice on their course choices before arrival and during their stay.	Met
M16 Staff carry out enrolment, cancellation and refund procedures efficiently, fairly, and with appropriate sensitivity.	Strength
M17 There are effective systems in place to maintain accurate and up-to-date records of student enrolment, payment and course details. These records are accessible at all times to authorised staff.	Met
M18 There are effective systems to maintain up-to-date and accessible records of local contact details for students, and their designated emergency contacts.	Met
M19 There is a clear and effective policy on student attendance and punctuality that is known to all staff and students and is applied consistently.	Strength
M20 All staff and students are made aware of conditions and procedures under which a student may be asked to leave the course.	Met
M21 All students and, where appropriate, group leaders and parents/legal guardians, receive information in writing about how to make a complaint.	Met

Comments

M14 Administrative staff provide an excellent service, as evidenced by student feedback. There are very good cover arrangements to ensure continuity of service.

M16 Enrolment procedures are carried out with a high degree of efficiency and sensitivity. The administrative team members work closely to ensure a very good standard of provision.

M19 The policies and procedures relating to attendance, particularly of students aged under 18, are clear, effective and consistently applied. Any absence of under 18s is immediately followed up.

Publicity

Met

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.	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.	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.	Met

Comments

All criteria in this section are fully met.

Premises and resources

Premises and facilities	Area of strength
P1 Premises, including any external areas, are in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration, and provide a comfortable environment for students and staff.	Strength
P2 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Met
P3 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Strength
P4 Free drinking water is available. A choice of appropriate food at affordable prices is available to students on site, if not available locally.	Strength
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display of general information.	Met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions, and for teachers to carry out their preparation and marking.	Met

Comments

P1 The premises have been refurbished to a very high standard. Excellent use has been made of the indoor and outdoor space to provide an attractive and comfortable environment.

P3 The spaces and facilities available to students are decorated and furnished to a high standard.

P4 The provision for food and drinks is very good. There is a café/common room which serves drinks, snacks, and a choice of hot dishes at lunch time. The food, which is varied and affordable, is popular with students.

Welfare and student services

Care of students	Met
W1 Providers ensure the safety and security of students on their premises by measures appropriate to their age and background, and the location.	Met
W2 There is a comprehensive plan to respond to any emergency. This plan is known to all staff, and relevant elements are known to students.	Met
W3 Students receive pastoral care appropriate to their age, background and circumstances. All staff and students know the name(s) of the person or people who deal with students' personal problems.	Met
W4 There are policies to promote tolerance and respect, and procedures for dealing with any abusive behaviour. All staff and students are aware of these.	Strength
W5 Where relevant, students receive a 24-hour emergency contact number for the provider, in writing.	Met
W6 Students receive in advance information on the most appropriate forms of transport between the point of entry to the UK and the provider or accommodation, including approximate costs.	Strength
W7 Students receive advice on relevant aspects of life in the UK.	Strength
W8 Students have access to adequate health care provision.	Met

Comments

W4 As noted in the full report, there are policies and procedures to ensure that this provision is of a high standard.

W6 Detailed and up-to-date information is provided about transport arrangements and costs on the website and relevant details are sent to individual students at the time of enrolment.

W7 Comprehensive information on aspects of living in the UK and locally is provided in the student handbook. This information is up to date, is relevant to students' needs and interests and is readily accessible.

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. Only points reviewed during this spot check are included here. Any points outstanding will be checked at the next full inspection.

Management

M9 The job description of the welfare officer has not been updated; it is still her original one from the NSoE.

Addressed. The duties of the welfare officer have been distributed between those of the members of the new administration and welfare team. All job descriptions are up to date.

M12 The St Giles appraisal and lesson observation policies have not been fully implemented.

Addressed. The group's policies and procedures have been implemented.

M22 Some information is misleading as the self-access centre and the library described are not yet in working order. After the inspection 'coming soon' was added to one area of the website, but in other areas there are still claims that the school has a self-access centre.

Addressed. There is a room with tablets for students' use, an additional quiet study room, some information leaflets on activities and resources available in the public domain, and a small collection of English language books that students can borrow from the office. The term 'Study Centre' is used rather than 'Self-Access Centre'.

M27 The fact that some accommodation is arranged by an agency is not made clear.

Addressed. This is now noted in publicity, although the school has not used an agency recently.

Premises and resources

P6 Teachers and inspectors were concerned that there would be insufficient space in the staffroom during the summer peak period.

Addressed. Lockers have been installed in a nearby area, teachers have access to the quiet room and there is some additional work space for those teaching in the annexe.

P9 Problems with the new IT infrastructure are ongoing resulting, on occasions, in limited internet access for administrative and teaching staff.

Not yet addressed. Staff reported that the service is still unreliable. Steps continue to be taken to rectify the service.

Teaching and learning

T11 There is no standardised syllabus for the afternoon general English.

Addressed.

Welfare and student services

W6 Travel information from the point of entry to the school or to accommodation is not provided for individual students.

Addressed. This is now a strength.

W11 Not all homestay provision has been re-inspected within the past two years.

Addressed.

W21 No written information is readily available on the implications of students living in private rented accommodation and there is no indication of help that may be available.

Addressed. This is available on the website and sent to individual students at the time of enrolment.

Conclusions

The provision has improved in several areas as the transition to new ownership has been completed. The staffing structure is working well. The school benefits from being part of a larger group with well-established policies and procedures. Most points noted in the last full inspection have been addressed. Two additional areas of strength can be included in the summary statement: student administration, and premises and facilities.
