

Organisation name	Stafford House International, Cambridge
Inspection date	26 February 2018
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Routine: newly accredited institution

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation. The next inspection falls due in 2020; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

Changes to the summary statement

The need for improvement in the area of publicity can now be removed.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Stafford House School of English, Cambridge in September 2016 and February 2018. The Accreditation Scheme assesses the standards of management, premises and resources, 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 English for adults (16+) and for closed groups of under 18s.

Strengths were noted in the areas of quality assurance, academic management, care of students and leisure opportunities.

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

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	September 2016
Last full inspection	September 2016
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	February 2018 (this report)
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	N/a
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Stafford House International Brighton, Canterbury and London
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Stafford House International Calgary, Toronto, Boston, Chicago, San Diego, and San Francisco; Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts; CATS College; On Campus; CEG Digital.

Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	65	210
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	18	16
Typical age range	18-24	18-24
Typical length of stay	5 weeks	3-4 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Brazilian, Thai, Turkish	French, Italian, Turkish
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	7	19
Total number of managers including academic	2	3
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	2	2

Premises profile	
Address of main site	15 & 12 Round Church Street, Cambridge CB5 8AD
Additional sites in use	Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts, 14 Round Church Street, Cambridge CB5 8AD (use of the canteen)
Additional sites not in use	3 Free School Lane, Cambridge CB2 3QA (up to five additional classrooms available in summer)
Sites inspected	15 & 12 Round Church Street

Introduction

Background

Stafford House International, Cambridge (SHIC) is part of the Cambridge Education Group (CEG), which owns other accredited language schools in Brighton, Canterbury and London, as well as Stafford House Summer, which delivers summer courses for juniors and teenagers. It also owns six language schools in north America. CEG includes the Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts (CSVPA), CATS colleges, CEG Digital, and foundation course partnerships with a number of universities.

SHIC opened on 14 September 2015. An extension to the accreditation of Stafford House School of English, London was granted in July 2015 to cover the Cambridge school. The extension spot check was conducted in October 2015. Human resources, IT, finance and health and safety are run from CEG head office which is also located in Cambridge.

The school offers general English classes in the mornings which may be supplemented with module lessons in the afternoons. At the time of the inspection there were classes at four levels plus an examination preparation class, and six modules. The school estimates that 80 per cent of students take the module classes. All the students on the spot check inspection date were over 18, but the school does accept students of 16 and 17 on adult courses. It also enrolls closed groups of students aged 14 plus during the academic year. Since the full inspection there have been nine such groups comprising approximately 170 students overall.

The last inspection report noted a need for improvement in publicity, which was therefore a focus in this spot check.

Preparation

The inspector was sent relevant documents and prospectuses and visited the school's website. No indication of the date of the inspection was given to the school.

Programme and persons present

The spot check inspection took place over half a day. The inspector arrived at 10.00 and left at 14.20. She interviewed the principal, the director of studies (DoS), and the student services and accommodation officer. She checked a range of documents, held a meeting with a class of students, and with the teachers who were timetabled that day. She also observed an elementary, advanced and exam class for ten minutes each. The inspection finished with a brief review of the findings and a discussion of the revised 2018 Scheme criteria with the principal and DoS.

Findings

Significant changes since the last inspection

The principal, the DoS, the student services and accommodation officer, and the student services officer, who had all been in post at the original inspection, left in the spring of 2017. The current principal and the student services and accommodation officer were appointed in May 2017, the student services officer in April 2017. The DoS appointee did not continue beyond his probationary period, and in November 2017 the present DoS, who had been the assistant director of studies (ADoS) and employed at the school since January 2016, took over the role. The senior teacher was appointed ADoS. Hence for the summer of 2017 the entire management team was newly in post. The principal reported that the company's director of operations, based at head office in Cambridge, had provided invaluable support throughout that period.

Management

Since the last inspection an entirely new management team has been appointed. Its members have worked well together and have maintained and developed the standards identified in the 2016 report. The teachers commented that SHIC was a congenial and stimulating place to work. The team has systematically and energetically addressed the points and recommendations made at the full inspection, where these are within their control.

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.	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.	Met

Comments

M26 Insufficient information is provided in the main text in the publicity.

Action taken on points to be addressed

Points which must be addressed within six months

Care of under 18s

C4 (2018: S4) In a few cases references had not been taken up on teachers before they were employed. The school has not completed suitability checks on all adults in homestays accepting under 18s. The accommodation agency used by the school carries out DBS checks on the main carer in homestays accepting under 18s, but not on all adults at the homestays.

Addressed. Satisfactory evidence was provided within six months. The inspector checked the new spreadsheet which tracks documentation for all teaching staff and can confirm that all references were received prior to teachers' start dates. The record of DBS checks was also scrutinised: a small minority had not provided their checks, but there is evidence that these have been followed up by the school. At the time of the spot check the school was not using the accommodation agency, having enough homestays on their own list. The inspector reminded the school that at the next inspection it will be expected that all adults resident in homestays which host under 18s will have undertaken suitability checks.

Other points to be addressed

Management

M6 (2018: M10) References are taken up for all staff and teachers, but these have not always been received prior to the taking up of the appointment.

Addressed. See C4 above.

M22 (2018: M22) There is no reference made to the additional premises in use for some classes over the summer.

Not yet addressed.

M23 (2018: M24) The implication is that the modules described, offered as part of the intensive programmes, are all available for students to choose from, but this is not the case.

Addressed. The text now indicates that '... modules vary from school to school, from month to month.'

Examples of the most popular modules follow.

M24 (2018: M24) Publicity does not make it clear that the school accepts closed junior groups through the year with the minimum age of 12. The minimum age stated is 16.

Partially addressed. This is noted in the Stafford House Summer brochure, but not in *Explore Your English*, the adult brochure (and hence the websites.) However, junior groups are taught in B Block (12 Round Church Street) and adult groups in A Block (15 Round Church Street). Break and lunch break times are staggered, so the two groups do not encounter each other in the course of the day.

The minimum age for members of closed groups is now 14.

M26 (2018: M27) Some homestay accommodation was arranged by a third party during the peak weeks this summer. This is not made clear in publicity.

Addressed. A note has been added to the Accommodation entry which states: 'London and Cambridge homestay accommodation is provided by third party agencies.' It would be more accurate, as far as Cambridge is concerned, to state that 'some accommodation' is thus provided.

M28 (2018: M28) Staff are described as 'highly trained and experienced' on the website and 'highly experienced and qualified' in the brochure. This was not the case of the teachers teaching at the time of the inspection. Five of the seven teachers were not TEFLQ and two of these had completed their initial training in 2015.

Addressed. Teachers are now described as 'well-prepared'.

Resources and environment

R4 (2018: P3/P4) At peak times the student lounge becomes a classroom.

Partially addressed. The school has limited space. The student lounge is the last room to be timetabled. Students have access to the canteen, the library and the reception area when the student lounge is unavailable.

R6 (2018: P6) Teachers reported that, as well as lack of space, often it is too noisy to work in the teachers' room.

Partially addressed. Again, the school has limited space. However, the principal has plans to re-decorate and re-furnish the teachers' room so that better use is made of the space available. In the summer there is a staffroom in the Free School Lane premises.

Teaching and learning

T12 (2018: T11) There is insufficient guidance to teachers to help them structure courses effectively.

Addressed. The DoS has created schemes of work for all levels and modules, based on the relevant course books. Hyperlinks have been added so teachers can share their schemes. The ADoS has responsibility for monitoring the schemes in line with the teachers' negotiation/adjustment of the syllabus with the students. In addition, CEG has, since the last inspection, set up an academic development board, with a view to encouraging greater collaboration between the UK and north American schools. The principal at Cambridge sits on this board. It is hoped that this will lead to the sharing of course modules and teaching materials across the company.

T16 (2018: T16) There are no specific strategies included in the courses to ensure that students can develop their language skills outside the classroom and teachers do not receive specific guidance.

Addressed. A bank of stimulating materials has been created based on activities that can be done outside the classroom, ranging from life-skills visits such as 'Going to the pharmacy' to exploitation of the museums and galleries in Cambridge. One SHIC teacher had in fact given a presentation on this topic at the Stafford House teachers' conference the weekend before the spot check. Although the school does not require staff to take students beyond the classroom, they are encouraged to do so, and teachers who are enthusiastic about outside activities are buddied with those who are less so. The DoS estimates that 80 per cent of teachers now include outside visits in their schemes of work.

T25 (2018: T25) Learning outcomes were not always presented in language appropriate for the level of the class.

Addressed. Professional development has focused on formulating objectives and outcomes, and evidence was provided to show that schemes of work have outcomes graded in language appropriate to the level of the class. The principal also has it in hand to provide the classrooms with whiteboards in addition to interactive whiteboards, so that outcomes (and other 'permanent' language) can be visible for the duration of a lesson.

Welfare and student services

W4 (2018: W4) Information in classrooms about the Prevent strategy is not sufficiently detailed.

Addressed.

W12 (2018: W11) Fire risk assessments have not been completed by all hosts on the agency's register.

Addressed. The student services and accommodation officer is monitoring the agency's progress.

Care of under 18s

C3 (M26) The publicity does not set out the level of pastoral care provided for under 18s or state clearly that 16–17 year-olds enrolled on adult courses are not supervised outside lessons.

Partially addressed. This is now briefly covered in the Terms and Conditions, but does not appear in the main body of the text.

Conclusions

The school has effective leadership, a stable teaching team, and competent welfare and administrative support. Its staff have addressed the points in the last inspection report with care and creativity.
