

Organisation name	Stafford House School of English, London
Inspection date	10 October 2017

**BACKGROUND**
**Organisation profile**

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	October 2011 (spot check extension of Canterbury's accreditation)
Last full inspection	October 2016
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	Courses for teachers
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Stafford House Schools of English in Cambridge, Canterbury, Brighton Stafford House Summer (formerly Study Holidays) at eight centres in the UK
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Stafford House International schools in four US and two Canadian locations Stafford House Summer (formerly Study Holidays) in three US and one Canadian location CATS Colleges in London, Cambridge and Canterbury CATS Academy in Boston On Campus Foundation Programmes at a variety of universities in the UK, EU and US

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

Current accredited status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: inspect new or additional premises

**Premises profile**

Address of main site	2 Southampton Place London WC1A 2DA
Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection	8 Southampton Place London WC1A 2DA
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of the inspection	CATS College London 43–45 Bloomsbury Square WC1A 2DA (Used in summer for teaching. 20 rooms available.)
Sites inspected	8 Southampton Place London WC1A 2DA

**Student and staff profile**

	At inspection	In peak week - July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	287	534
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	16	16
Typical age range	18–29	18–29
Typical length of stay	7 weeks	5 weeks

Predominant nationalities	Brazilian, Swiss, Chinese, Turkish	Brazil, Italian, Swiss, Thai, Turkish
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	23	35
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	8	14

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

In addition to its building at 2 Southampton Place in Bloomsbury, Stafford House School of English was using additional premises at Great Russell Street located five minutes walk away. In July 2017 it was decided to close these premises and use 8 Southampton Place on the same street as the main school. The current agreement allows the school to use this building until October 2018 and there is hope that this arrangement will be extended. The spot check was required to check the suitability of the new site.

### Preparation

The check was carried out by one inspector, who had not previously inspected the school. He contacted the provider to check if there were any dates which would not be suitable in the autumn of 2017, although the school was not informed when the inspection would actually take place. The Accreditation Unit sent the inspector the 2017 printed brochure and all other relevant papers. The inspector also looked at the school's website before the inspection.

### Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 0900 and left at 1245. There were meetings with the principal and operations manager at the main school, and the principal showed the inspector round both 2 and 8 Southampton Place. Separate focus group meetings were held with students and teachers. There were no formal observations of teachers, but the inspector visited two classes at 8 Southampton Place to see how the premises and facilities were being used. Relevant health and safety documents were sampled by the inspector. Progress on the points to be addressed from the October 2016 inspection was checked with the principal and written action plans were inspected.

## FINDINGS

### Timetabling arrangements

Students are allocated to classes at number 2 or number 8 Southampton Place. They receive their timetables on the first day of their course and do not know where they will be studying before they arrive at the school. It is possible they will have classes in either building during their course. All students have access to the facilities in both buildings at all times. This includes the student refectory facilities at the adjacent CATS College (also part of the Cambridge Education Group - CEG), which are accessed internally from 2 Southampton Place.

### Publicity

The general Stafford House brochure lists both buildings on Southampton Place on the page promoting the London school. In addition, on the student web portal, which is also promoted in the publicity, there is a picture of 8 Southampton Place with the following text which accurately describes the location and facilities of the new building:

'Our second building (8 Southampton Place) is located 1 minute's walk from our main school building and is on the same street. You will find our accommodation office on the ground floor and the building contains 10 classrooms, a student lounge and a small garden for relaxing when the weather is fine.'

### Health and safety

All required health and safety checks on number 8 Southampton Place have been managed by the full-time operations manager. Specialist external agencies carried out all required risk assessments and made recommendations, which had been implemented. In addition, further routine checks on electrical safety were planned for the autumn. A full fire drill had taken place during the summer and the results were recorded. All documentation was up to date. Provision made for the safety and security of students is exactly the same as at number 2, which met the criterion in the 2016 full inspection.

### Student feedback

Students reported that they found the classrooms and facilities at number 8 Southampton Place to be very satisfactory. They said that moving between the two buildings was not disruptive. Some also expressed a preference for the classrooms at number 8.

### Teacher feedback

Teachers reported no serious disadvantages to teaching at number 8. There was no disruption to their work and

they had easy access to all the key equipment and facilities that they required.

### 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

The facade of number 8 Southampton place looks very similar to number 2 and the interior structure and design is almost identical. It is part of the same terrace and used to be an extension of the accredited school located next door.

R1 The premises provide an appropriate environment for students. The classrooms are a good size and there is some relaxation space for students outside class times, although all facilities at number 2 are available if required. The accommodation office on the ground floor provides a comfortable environment for staff and is easily accessible to students.

R2 The classrooms were repainted when the school started using the building and furniture is of a good standard. Internally the building is in a very good state of repair, clean and well maintained. Depending on the decision in October 2018, further work will be carried out on the building's exterior.

R3 Different furniture layouts were noted in the classrooms visited and their spacious size meant that students could hear, see and write in comfort. There were interactive display monitors in all classrooms and teachers were able to use similar technology and software available to them at number 2. There was no noticeable disruption from extraneous noise and both students and teachers confirmed that the working temperature was always comfortable.

R4 There is a small student lounge and a garden for recreational use when the weather is fine. In addition, students can use the large student canteen at number 2/CATS at any time. This offers a range of tasty hot and cold food and drinks.

R5 General signage assists in showing students the way to the classrooms when they arrive. There is a range of attractively presented noticeboards that provide relevant information about the school and leisure activities.

R6 Teachers normally return to number 2 to carry out any preparation. Number 8 is used primarily as a teaching block although there is some room in the accommodation office on the ground floor for storage of materials and relaxation.

### POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED

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

#### Management

M21 In places there is hyperbole in the publicity.

**Addressed. Hyperbolic usage has been removed in the new publicity.**

M22 There is no reference in publicity to the second building in GRS where the students might be required to study.

**Addressed. Great Russell Street is no longer used and all publicity has been updated.**

M23 Information about course objectives for general English classes, in particular, is minimal. Publicity talks about a range of modules but gives no examples.

**Addressed. The brochure, website and student portal have all been updated to meet this criterion.**

M25 Costs of residential accommodation are not included.

**Addressed. Residential accommodation prices have always been included in separate price lists.**

M26 There is insufficient information about student houses and homestay accommodation.

**Partially addressed. Information has been added to the student portal and there is a link to a 'student house information sheet'. The 2018 pricelist renames this as 'student houseshare' to avoid any confusion with student residences. A new homestay information sheet is in production.**

M28 Staff are described as 'fully qualified', which is not true of the majority of teachers at the time of the inspection. Most teachers were not diploma qualified.

**Addressed. Reference to 'fully qualified Stafford House teachers' has been changed to 'Stafford House teachers'.**

M29 The SHSE brochure states that 'All English Courses in the UK accredited by' above the English UK marque and secondly the British Council logo. The CEG website uses the English UK marque to cover all its operations, including non-accreditable activities and its overseas centres.

**Addressed. The BC and English UK logos are now used correctly in the new brochure and on the CEG**

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website.

#### Welfare and student services

W1 The Finsbury Park residence had not undertaken a fire drill since January 2016.

**Addressed. All required fire safety measures are now all in place.**

#### Other points to be addressed

##### Management

M4 Some teachers noted the lack of opportunities to discuss issues which concern them with senior managers at group level.

**Addressed. There is now a regular teachers' forum with senior managers and three meetings were held before the summer 2017. Teacher satisfaction surveys now take place every six months with the next one due in October 2017.**

M14 Absenteeism was high in some classes and not all students were aware of the policy for punctuality.

**Partially addressed. The student portal has been adapted to promote school rules and warnings on absenteeism and punctuality. The policy is made clear at induction but there needs to be further monitoring to ensure that teachers are applying the policy both consistently and fairly. Teachers will be canvassed on their views of the policy which allows academic managers to issue students with 'a late pass' when certain conditions are met.**

M17 During the review process there is lack of focus on resources and variations in exam results.

**Addressed. There is now a review meeting with teachers for each exam session when results come in. Inconsistencies and anomalies in the results are discussed. A similar meeting takes place with new teachers on examination courses before they start, and minutes are taken.**

##### Resources and environment

R3 Students at GRS reported that heating was sometimes inadequate and sometimes excessive.

**Addressed.**

R6 The staffroom at GRS has no storage facilities for personal possessions.

**Addressed.**

R11 The language exercises available on computers are not easy to access and there are no written instructions for students to guide them.

**Partially addressed. The links in the browser favourites folder on student computers are being reviewed to improve accessibility and content. New posters displaying links and guidelines were seen in the computer room. Teachers are asked to arrange more training by taking students into the computer room for familiarisation and training.**

R12 The procedures for reviewing and developing resources, particularly of print material, are informal and unsystematic. The online material available to students is in need of review.

**Addressed. There is a new policy, which formalises the review of student and teacher resources.**

**This includes procedures for evaluating the effectiveness and accuracy of all website links on student computers.**

##### Teaching and learning

T12 When preparing weekly plans too much is left to the teachers' experience and there is insufficient written guidance on how to adapt and supplement the coursebook and link it to the syllabus.

**Addressed. Guidelines have been added to the teacher handbook and relevant training sessions have also been organised.**

T15 Too little attention is paid to learner training by many teachers.

**Addressed. Two annual training sessions now focus on developing student independent learning skills. In addition, this aspect of teaching is highlighted in lesson observation notes.**

T16 There was little evidence that teachers systematically integrated the local environment, the students' day-to-day life in London or the leisure programme with course content.

**Partially addressed. Internal training sessions have focused on the promotion of relevant learning tasks and there is a systematic attempt to build up more resources.**

T23 In the segments observed word stress and word class were mainly ignored and too little attention was given to register. Few teachers checked sufficiently students' understanding of the language taught.

T26 Nomination was underused. Too many classes were static and overly teacher-fronted.

T27 Understanding of instructions was rarely checked.

T28 Correction was a weakness. There was little evidence that students were given helpful feedback on their performance during skills lessons.

T29 Generally concept checking of new language was insufficient and teachers failed to explore the reasons exercise answers given by students were right or wrong.

**T23 – T29 are all partially addressed. Lesson observers now pay particular attention to this aspect of teaching and feedback and training are provided as required.**

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#### Welfare and student services

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W3 The welfare officer has responsibility for dealing with students' personal problems. The student handbook directs students to the welfare officer, but does not name her.

**Addressed. The welfare policy and student portal both name all persons of responsibility and in particular the welfare officer. This is reviewed annually (or if and when changes occur) to ensure accurate information is shared with students and they are clear about who they should talk to if they have any problems.**

W6 Information on travel from the point of entry to the school or homestay is only provided if a student asks for it. **Partially addressed. This process is currently being reviewed. Clear guidelines are now provided to students on the student portal about how the accurate means and costs of all travel between the point of entry, the school and their accommodation can be found out using online resources. Information sent to students refers to these guidelines.**

#### **Care of under 18s**

C4 Only the main carer is currently checked, not all resident adults.

**Addressed. The registered accommodation agencies used by the school now follow the correct procedures to check all resident adults.**

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

None.

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### **CONCLUSIONS**

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The additional premises being used are of a good standard. They provide a comfortable, spacious, safe and professional learning environment for students and teachers. Publicity about the premises is accurate and accessible.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

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The next inspection falls due in 2020; there are no grounds for bringing this forward. However, the school should report on its plans for additional premises when the current arrangements are reviewed in October 2018.

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### **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

#### **Changes to summary statement**

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

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#### **Summary statement**

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This private language school offers courses in general English for adults (16+).

The inspection report noted a need for improvement in the area of publicity.

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

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

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#### **Amended summary statement**

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