

Organisation name	Stafford House School of English, London
Inspection date	9 July 2018
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: monitor effect of change of provision

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

Courses for under 18s can now be added. Although the area of publicity was met and strengths were noted in the areas of premises and safeguarding, these relate specifically to the new programme and not to the full provision of the school.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Stafford House School of English, London in October 2016. 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 English for adults (16+) and under 18s.

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.

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	October 2011
Last full inspection	October 2016
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	October 2017
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	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

Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: <i>July</i>
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	441 (Main school), 11 (LAE) Total: 452	505
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	14	16

Typical age range	16–24 (Main school), 15–16 (LAE)	16–24
Typical length of stay	5 weeks (Main school), 2 weeks (LAE)	5 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Brazilian, Turkish, Taiwanese, Italian (Main school), Russian, Belarusian, Italian (LAE)	Brazilian, Italian, Turkish, Thai, French
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	29 (main school), 2 (LAE) Total: 31	32
Total number of managers including academic	6 (Main school), 3 (LAE) Total: 9	5
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	7 (Main school), 2 (LAE) Total: 9	8

Premises profile

Address of main site	2 Southampton Place, London WC1A 2DA
Additional sites in use	43–45 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2RA 8 Southampton Place, London WC1A 2EA
Additional sites not in use	None
Sites inspected	Garden Halls, 1 Cartwright Gardens, London WC1H 9EN CIEE (Council for International Educational Exchange), 46–47 Russell Square, London WC1B 4JP 2 Southampton Place, London WC1A 2DA

Introduction

Background

Stafford House School of English, London, is part of the Cambridge Education Group, which owns other accredited schools in Brighton, Cambridge and Canterbury, as well as Stafford House Summer (formerly known as Study Holidays).

The main business of the school is general English courses for adults (16+), enrolled both individually and in groups. However, in its annual declaration 2017–2018, the school notified a change to the eligible courses offered. From July 2018, it proposed to offer a general English course for individually enrolled juniors (14–17): London Academic Explorer (LAE). This programme was scheduled to run for two weeks and would take place in premises not previously used.

A spot check was arranged to assess the new programme and the suitability of the premises. The spot check relates to this course and these premises and not to the school as a whole.

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, but did not inform the school of the date of the inspection. The Accreditation Unit sent the inspector the print publicity it had on file and other relevant documents. The inspector also looked at the school's website.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 0845 and departed at 1430. Meetings took place with the principal, the centre director, the activities manager and the director of studies. He also met with a group of students and with the two teachers. There was no formal observation of teaching, but the inspector visited both classes while they were in progress. He visited CIEE, 46–47 Russell Square, where all the teaching takes place; Garden Halls, 1 Cartwright Gardens, where the students are accommodated and have their meals; and the main school at 2 Southampton Place, where the teachers have space and resources to prepare their lessons and teaching materials. Relevant documents were supplied by the provider, on request.

Findings

Management

Staff communicate effectively with each other in spite of the programme being run on three different sites. There are robust arrangements for gathering student feedback at appropriate times. This is collated and acted on. Recruitment of activities staff is carried out by Stafford House Summer in Canterbury, whereas the main school recruits academic staff. Sampling revealed that qualifications verification and suitability checks had been carried out satisfactorily.

Teachers confirmed that they had been appropriately inducted and that they felt well supported. Both had been observed in the first week of the course. They received detailed written feedback which they said they found helpful. All staff receive a mini-appraisal at the end of the two-week course.

Student administration is carried out effectively. Record-keeping, including student contact details and attendance, is up to date and complete, accessible electronically to all relevant staff.

Publicity

Publicity is provided online through a public website and a publicly available student portal, as well as through print brochures and PDF versions of these documents, aimed at agents. The content is accurate, gives rise to reasonable expectations and is in clear and accessible English. Information on most of the required areas is available and accessible. However, maximum class size is not explicitly stated for the new programme and information on costs is available in the materials aimed at agents, but not easy to find on the public website (see below).

Premises and resources

The teaching rooms are located in the basement of CIEE. The school has rented three rooms, two of which were in use at the time of the inspection. There are also toilets and a relaxation area for staff on this floor. On the ground floor, there is the entrance to the street and access to an area of decking at the rear of the building, which is used by staff and students for relaxation between lessons. There is also a café serving light refreshments, which is available to staff and students. The teaching rooms are sufficient in terms of size and number. Although in the basement, they are adequately lit and ventilated, with access to natural daylight. They are suitably furnished with white walls which double as whiteboards and video displays for projecting from a computer.

Teachers can use the main school at 2 Southampton Place, under five minutes' walk away from CIEE, to prepare their lessons, store their possessions and relax in. There is a satisfactory range and quantity of well-organised teaching resources available there, in addition to online and web-based resources. Teachers also have access to two high-quality printer/copiers for the preparation of materials, as well as to networked computers.

The students are accommodated and have their meals at Garden Halls, which is approximately eight minutes' walk from CIEE. The school has rented rooms and the use of other facilities from the University of London, which owns the building. The building has recently been refurbished and provides a high standard of ensuite accommodation and catering, of which the students signalled their approval to the inspector. The ensuite bedrooms are comfortable, clean and well appointed. The centre director, the activities manager and the two activity leaders reside there and work closely with University of London staff who provide the catering and security services (see below).

Learning resources are sufficient for the number, ages and backgrounds of the students. There is a well-organised set of resources for teachers.

Teaching and learning

The academic team is suitably qualified and experienced. Teachers are well supported by academic managers. In addition to the director of studies, the centre director is TEFL-qualified, which is an advantage on a programme such as this where lessons, activities and excursions are well integrated.

Academic management is the responsibility of the director of studies, in collaboration with the centre director and the principal. Cover is well provided for through the main school. Support, teacher development, monitoring and lesson observation are all satisfactorily and systematically arranged.

Course design

Course design is principled, coherently structured and available in writing to students in outline (see below).

There was no scope within the half-day inspection to carry out formal lesson observations, but students were complimentary about the lessons and felt that they were making progress.

Welfare and student services

Student safety and security is well taken care of on the teaching and residential premises. Student key cards are collected by an activity leader when the students leave the residence and are accompanied to the teaching building. They are also required to wear lanyards at all times. At lights-out (2230), an activity leader again collects each student's key card, which is returned at the wake-up call at 0730. At CIEE, students only have access to the classrooms, the stairwell, the toilets, the café and the break-out areas. They are not allowed to leave the building unaccompanied.

There is an emergency plan which staff are informed about at induction. This is included in a grab bag which is taken on all activities.

Students' pastoral needs are well attended to and the school promotes tolerance, respect for others and inclusivity

at induction, in the student handbook and through posters and flyers. Students' needs in relation to transportation on arrival, life in the UK and health care are satisfactorily provided for.

A high standard of residential accommodation is provided, which meets all the relevant criteria well. Leisure opportunities are well provided. There is an integrated and inclusive leisure programme, which comprises afternoon and evening activities, afternoon and weekend excursions and sporting activities. Some activities are explicitly linked to the academic programme, others are just for enjoyment. Students said the leisure programme was good, although at times they felt it was almost too full. The excursions to Thorpe Park and Cambridge were well liked.

Safeguarding under 18s

The provider makes staff and other relevant adults aware of its safeguarding policy, as appropriate. No student is enrolled without written parental/guardian consent, which is backed up by sufficient information about the level of care provided. Recruitment is carried out in line with safer recruitment good practice. Students' supervision and safety both during and outside lessons is suitably arranged. Residential accommodation is suitably arranged. Arrangements for ensuring contact between the provider and parents/guardians are robust (see below).

Management

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.	Not 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	
Publicity is provided online through a public website and a publically available student portal, as well as through print brochures and PDF versions of these documents, aimed at agents.	
M25 Information on costs is available in the materials aimed at agents, but not easy to find on the public website.	

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 (Garden Halls and CIEE) are in a very good state of repair and décor. They are spotlessly clean throughout. There is ample space for relaxation out of class, both for students and staff.	
P3 At CIEE, there is an area of decking at the rear of the building, which is used by staff and students for relaxation between lessons. There is also a café serving light refreshments, which is available to staff and students. The dining area at Garden Halls is spacious and appealing. There is ample room on the ground floor and in the basement near the dining area where students can relax. There is also a games room with a pool table and console games available.	

P4 The food provided at Garden Halls is varied and nutritious. Students were complimentary about its quality. Free water is provided. While at CIEE, students are supplied by the provider with free drinking water in bottles.

Teaching and learning

Course design and implementation	Area of strength
T11 Course design is based on stated principles. There is a coherent and appropriate course structure described in writing for teachers' guidance.	Strength
T12 Course design is regularly reviewed in light of the different and changing needs of students and feedback from teachers and students.	Met
T13 Written course outlines and intended learning outcomes, appropriate to the course length and type, are available to students.	Met
T14 Any activities additional to English classes, and which form part of the language curriculum, encourage the acquisition of language and the development of relevant language skills.	Strength
T15 Courses include study and learning strategies that support independent learning and enable students to benefit from their programmes and continue their learning after the course.	Strength
T16 Courses include strategies which help students to develop their language skills outside the classroom and benefit linguistically from their stay in the UK.	Strength

Comments

T11 The course is designed on the principle of providing language and skills preparation for academic study, with an emphasis on speaking and listening. There is a focus on group presentation skills, project work and note-taking, with the aim of building confidence. The design was developed initially by the principal, then trialled at Stafford House Canterbury, which specialises in young learners. Teachers were given the syllabus and from this have developed their weekly schemes of work with an appropriate level of autonomy, given their experience and expertise.

T13 The teacher's weekly plan is made available to students on the classroom wall.

T14 Project work involving surveys is carried out outside the classroom and is well monitored through the use of apps. Language improvement is reinforced by the rehearsal of tasks, leading up to a final version.

T15 The programme's design has the advantage of setting the development of study and learning skills at the heart of the programme.

T16 The integration of lessons with excursions and project work helps students to develop their language skills outside the classroom. At the end of the programme, each student receives a video record of the group presentation.

Safeguarding under 18s

Safeguarding under 18s	Area of strength
S1 There is a safeguarding policy which specifies procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students under the age of 18. A named member of staff is responsible for implementing this policy and responding to child protection allegations.	Met
S2 The provider makes the policy known to all adults in contact with under 18s through their role with the organisation, and provides guidance or training relevant to its effective implementation.	Met
S3 The provider has written parental/guardian consent reflecting the level of care and support given to students under 18, including medical consent.	Met
S4 Recruitment procedures for all roles involving responsibility for or substantial access to under 18s are in line with safer recruitment good practice and the organisation's safeguarding policy.	Met
S5 There are suitable arrangements for the supervision and safety of students during scheduled lessons and activities.	Strength
S6 There are suitable arrangements for the supervision and safety of students outside the scheduled programme.	Strength
S7 There are suitable arrangements for the accommodation of students.	Strength
S8 There are suitable arrangements to ensure contact between the provider and parents, legal guardians or their nominated representatives concerning the welfare of students.	Met

Comments

The main business of the school is courses for adults (16+). Of the 441 students enrolled in the main school, 89 were aged 16 or 17. All 11 students on the LAE programme were aged 15 or 16.

S5 Thoughtful use is made of the premises (Garden Halls and CIEE) and of procedures to ensure students' safety and make supervision as effective as possible. The choice of ensuite accommodation makes it possible to locate student accommodation in one area, whilst the control of key cards by activity leaders helps ensure that students are where they should be. The activities team are well qualified and experienced and there is a high ratio of staff to students.

S6 The rules are clearly explained with good use of graphics. Students are made aware of these and of the consequences of breaking them at induction. There is virtually no unsupervised time.

S7 All accommodation is residential and ensuite. All meals are provided. There are clear rules for what students may and may not do in the residence. Risks have been well assessed and mitigated through well thought-out arrangements. There is a high ratio of well-qualified, suitably experienced residential staff to students.

Action taken on points to be addressed

Since the previous spot inspection took place relatively recently and the outstanding points had been partially addressed, action taken on points to be addressed from previous inspections was not considered in this spot check.

Conclusions

The new programme is well managed and benefits from good premises and facilities. It is staffed by suitably experienced and qualified managers, teachers and activities staff. The course is well designed, with a high degree of integration between lessons, excursions and activities. Student welfare and safeguarding are well taken care of.
