

Organisation name	Stafford House Study Holidays, Canterbury
Inspection date	4–6 August 2021
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: follow up on actions taken by the organisation to address concerns about the conduct of pre-employment checks in summer 2019.

**Recommendation**

We recommend continued accreditation. The next inspection falls due in 2023; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

**Changes to the summary statement**

No changes need to be made to the summary statement apart from adding the date of this inspection, changing the name of the provider to Stafford House Study Holidays, and including 18 year-olds in the age range.

**New summary statement**

The British Council inspected and accredited Stafford House Study Holidays in July 2018 and in August 2021. 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](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation) for details).

This large private language teaching organisation offers residential vacation courses in general English for under 18s and 18 year-olds.

Strengths were noted in the areas of strategic and quality management, staff management, academic management, teaching, and leisure opportunities.

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

**Updated summary inspection findings**

None.

**Organisation profile**

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	1994
Last full inspection	2018
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	N/a
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Stafford House International schools in Brighton, Cambridge, Canterbury and London.
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	CATS Colleges, ELT schools in Canada.

Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: August
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	39	39
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	8	8
Typical age range	8–15	8–15
Typical length of stay	3 weeks	3 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Russian	Russian
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	4	4

Total number of managers including academic	2	2
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	1	1

### Premises profile

Address of main site	19 New Dover Road Canterbury, Kent CT1 3AS
Additional sites in use	Dover College, Effingham Crescent, Dover CT17 9RH
Additional sites not in use	N/a
Sites inspected	N/a

### Introduction

#### Background

Stafford House Study Holidays (SHSH) forms part of CATS Global Schools, owned since July 2019 by Bright Scholar, an educational company trading on the New York stock exchange. Since the last full inspection the name of the provider has reverted to SHSH from Stafford House Summer.

SHSH offers courses to students in the 8 to 18-year-old age range. In addition to the residential programmes that fall under the SHSH accreditation, SHSH offers year-round closed groups and summer programmes for juniors and young adults in the separately accredited Stafford House International year-round schools in Brighton, Cambridge, Canterbury and London.

The last full inspection of SHSH took place in 2018, when the head office and three centres were visited. In 2019, concerns were raised about recruitment checks on staff. Investigations were conducted by the Accreditation Unit, which included visits to the Cambridge centre and SHSH head office, contact with host schools, interviews with managers and staff and liaison with relevant local authorities. SHSH also conducted an internal investigation and subsequently submitted a report on this which set out the remedial action taken. A follow-up spot check was scheduled for 2020 but did not take place as no centres ran due to the pandemic. However, there was a head office spot check in February 2020 to assess the implications of the change of ownership.

The purpose of this spot check was to follow up on actions taken by the organisation to address concerns about the conduct of pre-employment checks in summer 2019 (inspection criteria S1 and S4).

At the time of this spot check inspection, the wider group was in the process of integrating a number of HR policies and systems across the different parts of the organisation. In the summer of 2021 only one residential centre (Dover College) was running due to the global pandemic. At the time of the inspection, there was a group of 39 Russian students in the college, who were accompanied by four group leaders. SHSH was also running a number of online classes, which fell outside the scope of this spot check.

#### Preparation

The inspector, who had been involved in the inspection of Stafford House Canterbury and the recruitment investigation in 2019, was sent information about the previous full inspection, the school brochure, recruitment-related reports, and a number of additional documents sent by the SHSH head of student experience (HoSE), including SHSH's safeguarding policy and parental consent form.

#### Programme and persons present

The half-day inspection was conducted remotely by one inspector and spread over three mornings. The inspector interviewed the HoSE for SHSH, the HR business partner manager, the centre director and the student welfare officer of the Dover College centre. He held a group interview with three teachers, who were also involved in the staffing of the activity and excursion programme under the direction of an activities manager.

### Findings

#### Management

A number of changes have been made to recruitment procedures in line with safer recruitment guidelines. Large parts of the recruitment process have been centralised and are now conducted by the wider group's HR department in Cambridge using a single central register (SCR). The central HR team are experienced and knowledgeable in carrying out all pre-employment checks efficiently. Additional staff are employed when required. Further checks have been put in place, such as a principal's new starter checklist and all risk assessments for staff with delayed suitability checks are now monitored by and agreed with a senior manager. Clear and appropriate procedures are in place for initially checking documents remotely and for seeing originals when staff arrive in centres.

### Safeguarding under 18s

<b>Safeguarding under 18s</b>	Met
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.	Met
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.	Met
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

There were 39 students aged between eight and 15 studying at the Dover College centre at the time of the inspection.

S1 Designated safeguarding leads and their deputies are identified in the policy and made known to staff. The policy includes updated guidance on handling delayed suitability checks.

S2 Training is provided for all staff, who carry a card in their lanyard which summarises safeguarding issues and reporting procedures.

S4 As outlined above in this report, a number of measures have been taken to improve recruitment processes in line with safer recruitment good practice and the safeguarding policy. These procedures have reduced the number of delayed suitability checks and keep staff informed of their progress.

S6 Rules for the supervision of students in their free time on excursions are very clear and all free time on site is well supervised.

### 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.*

M24 The Cambridge centre advertises its minimum age as 12 and maximum age as 18. There was one 11 year-old and one 19 year-old. Oakham advertises its minimum age as 9. There was one 8 year-old.

**Addressed. The advertised age range for some centres has been expanded. The age range in centres will need to be confirmed at the time of the next full inspection.**

M26 Publicity does not give a sufficient description of the level of pastoral care and support provided outside of the classroom.

**Not yet addressed.**

M27 At Oakham the boarding houses were each described as having a common room with a television. In one house there was no common room.

**Addressed. The brochure text for the centre has been amended.**

P8 At the Bankside centre there was a shortage of projectors so some teachers had to show video clips on laptops. Some whiteboards at the start of July had only just arrived.

**This is no longer a point to be addressed as these premises are no longer used by the provider.**

S7 The building in Bankside is also used as bed and breakfast accommodation for the public and students share corridors with adults who are not part of the school. Two students reported that on one occasion, adult strangers had knocked on the door of their room. Although they had not perceived this as a threat, it is clear that there is a risk to the security of the under 18s in the residence. In addition, at the time of the inspection, three 18 year-olds were sharing bedrooms with students under 16.

**This is no longer a point to be addressed as these premises are no longer used by the provider.**

### Conclusions

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SHSH has taken steps to improve the procedures for recruiting staff, for ensuring that appropriate measures are taken for conducting security checks in a timely manner and for effectively handling any delayed checks. Most of the points to be addressed from the last full inspection have been addressed or are no longer relevant, as they refer to a centre that SHSH is no longer using.

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