

Organisation name	Stratford-upon-Avon College
Inspection date	23 November 2015

## BACKGROUND

### Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2007
Last full inspection	May 2015
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	N/a
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a

### Current accreditation status and reason for spot check

Current accredited status	Accreditation under review
Reason for spot check	Signalled: end period under review

### Premises profile

Address of main site	The Willows North, Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon CV36 9QR
Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection	N/a
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of the inspection	N/a
Sites inspected	The college campus, which is on the edge of the town centre close to the railway station, consists of a series of low-rise buildings. The international department and the classrooms it uses are housed in a single block. Although the campus is compact, it offers a range of facilities and services; these include a coffee bar and a restaurant, a library, a theatre and a small fitness centre. There are two residential buildings on campus, used mostly by international students.

### Student and staff profile

	At inspection	In peak week (October)
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	195	195
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	16	16
Typical age range	16–21	16–21
Typical length of stay	9 months	9 months
Predominant nationalities	Chinese, Nigerian	Chinese, Nigerian
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	5	5
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	7	

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

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The college was inspected in May 2015 and accreditation was placed under review because the section standards for *Management* and *Teaching and learning* were not met. The period of review was to be ended by a spot check within six months focusing on staff management, publicity, academic staff profile and academic management.

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### Preparation

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The inspectors received a print copy of the previous report, an electronic copy of the 'Points to be addressed', a hard copy of publicity materials, annual declarations and relevant correspondence. The reporting inspector telephoned the college to check whether any dates would be unsuitable. He was told that the head of international, who at the time of the last inspection was line manager for ELT, would be leaving and that his replacement would be taking over in early November. This was taken into account when scheduling a date for the spot check. Immediately before the inspection, the inspectors viewed the college website.

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### Programme and persons present

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The inspectors arrived at 10.45 and left at 17.00. They held meetings with the assistant principal, who is line manager for the head of international, and the recently appointed head of international, the academic manager for ELT, international office staff responsible for the induction and welfare of students, and the accommodation officer. One inspector observed two classes, conducted a brief focus group with students in one of the two classes, and checked the accommodation database. Documents examined included an action plan relating to the *Points to be addressed* from the previous inspection, the current organogram, job descriptions, teacher qualifications, minutes of meetings, continuing professional development (CPD) records, observation records, student handbooks, a summary of student feedback, and information for homestay hosts. Brief feedback was given on the findings.

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## FINDINGS

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### Course provision

The college offers an International Foundation Programme (IFP) on behalf of Warwick University and its own IFP programme (with a slightly lower admission level). All students were on one or the other programme.

Since the focus of the spot check was on areas within the *Management* and *Teaching and learning* sections, this report takes as its starting-point the changes that have been made to address underlying weaknesses in these areas. Specific actions on *Points to be addressed* are then noted; and revised section summaries are included in the Conclusions to show the extent to which the provider now meets the section standards for *Management* and *Teaching and learning*.

### Management (staff management, publicity)

A new version of the brochure has been produced and the website has been amended to take account of many of the *Points to be addressed*. An in-house website developer is now available so that any changes can be actioned quickly, and further changes were made to the website immediately after the spot check.

### Teaching and learning (academic staff profile, academic management)

A suitably qualified and experienced existing member of staff has been appointed as academic manager for ELT and given teaching remission to carry out his duties, which include team co-ordination, teacher support, the organisation of an ELT-specific CPD programme, and observation of teachers. A new head of international has been appointed.

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## POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED

*Points to be addressed from the previous inspection report with comments (in bold) to indicate how far these have been addressed.*

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### Points which must be addressed before continued accreditation can be recommended

#### Management

M3 Job descriptions are extremely generic and do not specify the duties of the staff working with ELT students.

#### Addressed.

M4 There are few formal meetings and these are not minuted.

**Addressed. A short daily meeting takes place each morning before teaching begins. There are weekly international team meetings and formal half-termly ELT team meetings. Evidence was seen that meetings are now minuted.**

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M9 There had been no ELT developmental activity for some time.

**Addressed. A variety of measures have been put in place to provide for ELT-specific professional development. These include timetabled CPD sessions, two of which had taken place earlier in the term, and access to online resources in order to provide structured opportunities for individualised self-directed professional development.**

M16 Some of the points had been addressed but a significant number had not.

**Addressed. There has been a conscientious and systematic approach to addressing all the outstanding points. A small number had not been fully addressed at the time of the spot check, but steps were taken to deal with these subsequently.**

M22 Pictures in the publicity are not captioned and may mislead potential international students. The side bar and scrolling banners on the international department web pages contain information for home students that is likely to confuse and mislead international students. Classes are described as 'small', but they may contain up to 20 students.

**Partially addressed. The website has been redesigned to eliminate potentially misleading information. The brochure still contains one uncaptioned photograph of a half-timbered building and describes as 'small' classes which may contain up to 20 students.**

M23 There is no description of the English and study skills course elements.

**Addressed. The website now contains a detailed description of these course components.**

M24 The times of classes, dates of courses and non-teaching days are not given.

**Addressed. The website gives dates of courses, half-term breaks and the start and end of college teaching days are stated. Following the spot check, the website was further amended to include a sample timetable showing times of English classes and dates of public holidays.**

M25 The financial pages note that 'fees vary' but do not indicate what they are. It is not made clear that teaching materials and exam fees are included in the overall fees: there are no details about refunds.

**Partially addressed. The website shows fees for the different courses and states that the tuition fee includes the first attempt at an external examination and teaching materials (but not textbooks, for which indicative costs are not shown). Information is given about refunds.**

M27 Social and cultural events are mentioned but not described and there is no indication whether they would incur a fee.

**Addressed. Social and cultural events are listed on the website and indicative fees indicated where appropriate.**

M28 Teachers are described as 'highly qualified'; this is not true of all of them.

**Addressed. Teachers are now described as 'qualified and experienced'.**

M29 The unqualified Accreditation marque is used in the publicity related to the subject specific elements in courses as well as the ELT content. There are also two framed copies of the unqualified marque in the international department office reception area.

**Addressed.**

### **Teaching and learning**

T4 While one of the teachers was formerly the department's director of studies and carries out voluntarily a number of the tasks of an academic manager, he does not have the title, pay or remission from a full teaching load that would enable him to be considered the academic manager for the ELT activity within the department. None of the other senior staff in the department are qualified to act as the academic manager.

**Addressed. A suitably qualified and experienced teacher has been appointed to the role of academic manager for ELT, with remission from teaching duties to carry out this role.**

T10 There are no formalised arrangements for ELT specific training and none had taken place.

**Addressed. Appropriate arrangements are now in place and evidence was seen that targeted ELT specific training had taken place and was planned.**

T11 Observation of teachers is carried out by members of the college cross departmental observation; they are not TEFLQ.

**Addressed. All teachers will now be observed by the TEFLQ academic manager. As yet, no arrangements are in place for the observation of the academic manager, who normally teaches 14 hours per week.**

### **Points to be addressed within six months**

#### **Welfare and student services**

W1 Some classrooms on the second floor of C block do not have fire evacuation notices to guide students in emergencies.

**Addressed. The inspectors were told that classrooms are locked if a teacher is not in the room, that all buildings have a fire warden and that all staff in the international team are shortly to be trained as fire wardens.**

W10 When homestay accommodation is inspected before students are placed, hosts are not informed about the

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legal requirement to undertake fire risk assessments of their homes.

**Addressed. Homestay hosts have been informed of this requirement by email, and evidence was seen that this had been done in the case of the students currently in homestay. Guidelines for hosts have yet to be revised.**

W16 There were five students living in the homestay visited.

**Not addressed. The inspectors were told that this was an emergency arrangement. However, guidelines for hosts do not specify that no more than four students may be accommodated in a homestay nor that the students hosted should not speak the same first language (unless this has been specifically requested in writing).**

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

C7 Although the college does not enrol students aged under 16, in the homestay visited three thirteen year-old boys were in the house with an adult student from the college, which is not a satisfactory situation and was not reflected in college accommodation records.

**Addressed. The inspectors were told that homestay hosts had been informed of requirements.**

### **Other points to be addressed**

#### **Management**

M18 Initial feedback is not systematically collected.

**Partly addressed. An online questionnaire is now used to elicit feedback from students, but this is primarily programme-focused and does not cover all services. The results were seen of one survey, but no action was noted.**

M20 The information in the student handbook is in rather legal language.

**Addressed.**

#### **Teaching and learning**

T2 Two of the five teachers are not TEFLQ as is normally required for EAP teachers.

**Partly addressed. One of the teachers referred to had left the college; the other had been largely redeployed. Another teacher had been appointed. Although this teacher was experienced and held both a first degree and a TEFLI qualification her other teaching qualification had not been fully checked. Following the spot check, the inspectors were told that appropriate support measures would be implemented while checks were carried out with the awarding body – and subsequently, if necessary.**

T7 The timetable is not easy to create as it has to fit in with subject teachers' prior teaching commitments and the hours that part-time staff are available. This leads to it being disjointed and allowing little time for team meetings.

**Addressed. Steps have been taken to ensure that meetings of both the international team and the ELT team take place on a regular basis.**

T28 There was no correction of pronunciation or writing. In most cases, there was too much teacher talking time and opportunities for the students to generate their own knowledge inductively were missed.

**Addressed. The segments observed were satisfactory in respect of these points.**

T29 The pace in most segments was too slow, with too much time given to relatively simple tasks. Students were not sufficiently challenged and this led to some disengagement.

**Addressed. The segments observed were satisfactory in respect of these points, and students were engaged.**

#### **Welfare and student services**

W8 Students are not given information about the need to pay for any dental treatment they might need in the UK.

**Addressed. This information is now included in the international student welcome leaflet, which is distributed during induction.**

W12 The accommodation register had some incomplete and inaccurate information about the dates of visits to accommodation.

**Addressed. The register is now up-to-date.**

W14 Student feedback about accommodation is collected towards the end of the course but not initially.

**Not addressed. The online questionnaire used to collect early feedback does not include accommodation.**

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## CONCLUSIONS

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The revised section summaries below indicate the progress that has been made:

### Previous Management summary

The provision does not meet the section standard. While most aspects of student administration and quality assurance are thorough there is a need for improvement in both *Staff management* and *Publicity*.

### Revised Management summary

The provision meets the section standard. The management of the provision operates to the benefit of its students, in accordance with its publicity and most aspects of student administration and quality assurance are thorough.

### Previous Teaching and learning summary

The provision does not meet the section standard. Although course design, learner management and the teaching observed were satisfactory, there is an urgent need for improvement under *Academic staff profile* and *Academic management*; there is no academic manager and arrangements for supporting and monitoring staff are not satisfactory. No ELT specific staff development activity is taking place.

### Revised Teaching and learning summary

The provision meets the section standard. Teachers are given sufficient support to ensure that their teaching meets the needs of their students. Programmes of learning are managed for the benefit of students. The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme.

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## RECOMMENDATION

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The period of review may now be ended; the next inspection falls due in 2019 and there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

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## SUMMARY STATEMENT

### Changes to summary statement

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The summary statement can now be reinstated (see below).

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### Summary statement

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The British Council inspected and accredited Stratford-upon-Avon College in November 2015. The Accreditation Scheme assesses the standards of management, resources and premises, teaching, welfare, and care of under 18s and accredits organisations which meet the overall standard in each area inspected (see [www.britishcouncil.org/accreditation](http://www.britishcouncil.org/accreditation) for details).

The English language teaching department of this college of education offers courses in academic English for adults (16+).

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

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## Points to be addressed outstanding from the previous inspection(s) or arising from this visit

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### Management

M6 The teaching qualifications of a newly appointed teacher had not been fully verified.

M18 The online questionnaire used to elicit feedback from students is primarily programme-focused and does not cover all services. No action was noted on the feedback summary seen.

M22 The brochure contains one uncaptioned photograph of a half-timbered building and describes as 'small' classes which may contain up to 20 students.

M25 The website states that the tuition fee includes teaching materials (but not textbooks, for which indicative costs are not shown).

### Teaching and learning

T2 The teaching qualifications of a newly appointed teacher had not been fully verified. It was therefore not clear whether she was appropriately qualified to teach EAP.

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T11 No arrangements are in place for the observation of the academic manager, who normally teaches 14 hours per week.

**Welfare and student services**

W14 The online questionnaire used to collect early feedback does not include accommodation.

W16 Guidelines for hosts do not specify that no more than four students may be accommodated in a homestay nor that the students hosted should not speak the same first language (unless this has been specifically requested in writing).

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