

Organisation name	Sussex Coast College, Hastings
Inspection date	8 December 2016

BACKGROUND
Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	May 1992
Last full inspection	July 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	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: follow up on Points to be addressed

Premises profile

Address of main site	Station Plaza, Station Approach, Hastings TN34 1BA
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 is located in a large modern building next to the train station in the centre of Hastings. The atrium provides a light central area. A wide range of facilities is provided. These include a gym, a learning resource centre, cafés and restaurants.

Student and staff profile

	At inspection	In peak week (July)
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	22	79
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	16	14
Typical age range	16–30	14–30
Typical length of stay	12 weeks	2–4 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Japanese	Italian, Brazilian
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	5	8
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	3	3

INTRODUCTION

Background

Sussex Coast College offers general English courses for adults (16+) and vacation courses for groups of juniors (14+). An international foundation year course is not currently being run.

The college offers both ESOL and EFL courses and these are now under the same management in the international business development section. EFL students are now taught in separate groups, although some of the teachers work in both areas. The ESOL courses are not covered by the Accreditation Scheme.

At the last full inspection in July 2015, it was recommended that accreditation be continued, but that evidence be submitted within six months to demonstrate that weaknesses in care of under 18s had been addressed. It was also recommended that a spot check take place within 12 months focusing on all points to be addressed.

Preparation

The inspector was sent the previous full inspection report, as well as recent annual declarations and correspondence with the Accreditation Unit. He also received documentary evidence submitted by the college, which addressed the weaknesses in care of under 18s.

The inspector contacted the college in advance to introduce himself and establish whether any dates would be inconvenient and whether there were times when key staff would be absent. He also received from the college an updated action plan and information on likely student numbers.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 09.10 and departed at 15.50.

Meetings were held with the head of international, the academic manager, the deputy academic manager and the accommodation and welfare officer. A focus group meeting was held with a group of students and there was also a meeting with the one teacher who was available at the time of the inspection. Two lesson segments were observed. Documents relating to the points to be addressed were studied. The round up was attended by the head of international, the deputy academic manager and the accommodation and welfare officer.

FINDINGS

EFL courses for international students and ESOL courses are now under the same academic manager, who had previously run the ESOL department for a number of years. The previous academic manager of EFL courses still teaches on these courses and deputises as academic manager for the merged department. At the time of the inspection, he was deputising. The structure of the department is clear and makes efficient use of resources, since many teachers work in both areas and the establishment of a deputy role ensures continuity.

In previous years, EFL and ESOL students were taught together, but EFL students are now taught in separate groups. This can be a challenge when student numbers are low, but the college undertakes to run a minimum of two EFL groups.

A detailed action plan was submitted which dealt with the points to be addressed. This is commented on below.

Both teachers timetabled on the day of the inspection were observed. The standard of teaching was good.

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. Only points reviewed during this spot check are included here. Any points outstanding will be checked at the next full inspection.

Management

M9 There has been little EFL specific CPD over the last year.

Partially addressed. Some CPD related to EFL had taken place, but as yet plans to offer sessions on language awareness and methodology had not been implemented.

M18 The system for collating and analysing student feedback is not consistent across all courses.

Addressed. The use of an online survey which all students complete allows for efficient collating and analysis of results.

M19 No records of action taken in response to staff feedback were seen.

Addressed. The same type of online survey is used for staff.

M23 Course descriptions for general English courses are brief and do not refer to objectives for each level.

Addressed. At the time of the inspection, this had not been addressed, but subsequent to the inspection the

website was amended and the descriptions are now satisfactory.

M24 Information about class times is not included.

Addressed.

M25 The approximate costs for the leisure programme are not included.

Addressed.

M28 In the printed publicity teachers are described as being "post graduate trained teaching staff, who are all experts in English language." This was not an accurate description at the time of the inspection.

Addressed.

M29 The Accreditation Scheme marque is incorrectly used on a webpage advertising A levels, higher education and teacher training.

Addressed.

Teaching and learning

T9 Too little attention is paid to the academic management needed for students who join after a course has begun.

Addressed. Placement procedures are now more thorough and teachers receive detailed diagnostic information about new arrivals. The academic manager monitors late arrivals and class teachers help them to integrate, if necessary spending time with them individually. Student mentors are sometimes appointed to support late arrivals.

T10 Over the last year there has been very little opportunity for EFL specific language awareness or methodology training.

Partially addressed. Although some EFL-related CPD had taken place, plans to run sessions on language and methodology had not been implemented.

T17 As only a few levels have been offered during the summer the range of levels in each class has been too broad and teachers have found it difficult to meet the needs of all the students.

Addressed. Improved placement procedures aim to ensure that there are no more than two different levels per group. Teachers receive detailed diagnostic information which helps them to differentiate in their teaching.

Welfare and student services

W10 The college was not aware of the requirement for homestay and 'private home' providers to carry out a full risk assessment on their property.

Addressed.

W12 There is no easy way of identifying when visits are due.

Addressed.

W16 The distinction between 'homestay' and 'private house'/residential is not made clear in publicity.

Addressed.

W25 The agency used by the college for some self-catering accommodation is not routinely visited or the accommodation spot-checked.

This agency is not currently being used by the college.

W28 Activity staff, including the activities manager, are not first aid trained.

Addressed. Staff employed by the college to direct sporting activities are first-aid trained or have swift access to first-aid trained staff. When the college uses the services of an external tour company, the students are accompanied by a first-aid trained member of college staff.

W28 Risk assessments are mainly generic although some are specific to the activity. However, there is insufficient focus on the fact that the students are not native speakers and many are unfamiliar with the culture.

Addressed.

Care of under 18s

C1 The safeguarding policy, the staff code of conduct and the bullying and harassment policy are very generic and take too little account of the current context in which many students are under 18, non-native speakers and living away from home.

Addressed. The safeguarding policy and associated policy documents have been appropriately amended.

C3 Publicity in general makes very little reference to pastoral care for international students and to the lack of supervision outside class times.

Addressed.

C6 Risks associated with unsupervised free time for juniors in Hastings have been insufficiently assessed and there is little advice given to students about what they should do and should not do during unsupervised times.

Addressed. A new parental consent form for under 18s outlines the areas of risk appropriately. A new student support leaflet gives information and advice on what students under 18 may and may not do during unsupervised times.

C7 Too little guidance is given to hosts about 16 and 17 year-olds and what they may do outside scheduled activity times. There are no risk assessments in place for hosts who offer private house accommodation to under 18s.

Addressed. Hosts receive appropriate and sufficient advice through a pre-arrival information booklet, which is also issued to students. They also receive signed copies of the parental consent form. Checks are run on whether risk assessments have been carried out.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit

T5 A rationale is required for an academic manager without appropriate EFL qualifications.

Addressed. A rationale was provided subsequent to the inspection, which was accepted within the context of the inspection. The academic manager has many years of relevant academic management experience; secondly, he is studying for a diploma-level qualification; and thirdly, the academic management team has a TEFLQ member who can cover lesson observation until the academic management team leader becomes TEFL-qualified.

T11 Not all teachers have been observed by a suitably qualified academic manager in the past twelve months.

CONCLUSIONS

The college has made good progress in implementing its action plan and dealing with the points to be addressed arising from the previous inspection.

RECOMMENDATION

The next inspection falls due in 2019; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Changes to summary statement

The need for improvement in quality assurance, publicity and accommodation can be removed from the summary statement.

Summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Sussex Coast College Hastings in July 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/education/accreditation for details).

The English language teaching department of this college of further education offers courses in general and academic English for adults (16+) and for closed groups of under 18s, and vacation courses for under 18s.

Strengths were noted in the areas of premises, learning resources, and care of students.

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