

Organisation name	Cambridge Centre for Languages
Inspection date	2 August 2024
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: review weaknesses in teaching and other points to be addressed

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation. The next inspection falls due in 2027; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

Changes to the summary statement

The need for improvement in the area of teaching can now be removed and the date of this inspection added.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Cambridge Centre for Languages in July 2023 and August 2024. 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 closed groups of under 18s and vacation courses for under 18s.

Strengths were noted in the area of premises and facilities.

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

Updated summary inspection findings

Teaching and learning

The provision meets the section standard. Course design and learner management are satisfactory. Academic management is generally appropriate; teachers receive adequate support, and formal observations are conducted. The courses are managed to the benefit of students. The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme.

Safeguarding under 18s

The provision meets the section standard. There is a detailed safeguarding policy in place, and staff receive suitable training. Systems for monitoring students during and outside scheduled activities are appropriate.

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2003
Last full inspection	2023
Subsequent checks/visits (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

Student and staff profile

	At inspection	Estimate at peak: July
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	25	70
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	8	8
Typical age range	8–17	8–17
Typical length of stay	2 weeks	2 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Chinese	Chinese
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	5	6

Total number of managers including academic	5	5
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	4	4

Premises profile

Address of main site	Cambridge Centre for Languages, Pioneer House, Vision Park, Cambridge CB24 9NL
Additional sites in use	N/a
Additional sites not in use	St Mary's School, Cambridge
Sites inspected	Old Buckenham Hall School, Brettenham Park, Bury Road, Ipswich IP7 7PH

Introduction

Background

The Cambridge Centre for Languages (CCL) was founded in 1982 and first accredited in 2003. The spot check was conducted to review the teaching, which was a need for improvement in the 2023 inspection, and the other points to be addressed in the previous report. In 2023 CCL offered junior courses and senior courses (9 to 17 years of age) at St Mary's School, Cambridge. In 2024, the organisation's International Summer School was due to operate from two sites: St. Mary's School for the senior course (13–17 year-olds) and Old Buckenham Hall (OBH) for the junior courses (8–12 year-olds). In the end, both the courses were offered from Old Buckenham Hall School, a day and boarding preparatory school for boys and girls in the village of Brettenham, Suffolk, England.

Preparation

The inspector contacted the school and spoke with the principal, the centre director and the academic manager, and discussed with them the focus and the structure of the spot check. He read the last report, the publicity and the documentation sent to him by CCL.

Programme and persons present

The inspector visited the OBH campus for a day at the end of the third week of the courses running there. He held interviews with the course director and the academic manager, who was also the designated safeguarding lead. The inspector spoke with two group leaders and conducted separate focus group meetings with the teachers and students. He inspected the boys' and girls' dormitories and sampled the food in the canteen. He observed all of the teachers teaching in the week of the inspection.

Findings

Management

The school's goals and values are clear. The organisational structure of the summer school is effective. The management team in the centre consists of the principal, the centre director, the academic manager, the residential manager and the senior teacher. Most of them have worked on previous courses. Procedures for obtaining and acting on feedback from students, group leaders and staff work effectively, as does staff management. Recruitment and induction procedures are appropriate.

Student administration is suitable, and staff are helpful and friendly towards students and group leaders. Publicity generally accurately reflects the centre provision. However, the publicity refers to some facilities that are not used by the students, such as the IT room and the Science facilities. Publicity also states: 'The accommodation is in small dormitories with normally 4 or 5 beds per room', when there were eight students accommodated in one room at the time of the inspection.

Premises and resources

Premises and facilities provide a comfortable environment for both students and staff. The centre has all its classrooms in the same area of the school and uses a library in the main building as a large office. Classrooms are suitable and all have computers, large screens and whiteboards. Other facilities used include separate dormitories for boys and girls, a canteen, an assembly hall, a sports hall, arts facilities, a swimming pool and other external sports pitches.

Learning resources are generally adequate, and technical support is on hand if there are any technical issues.

Teaching and learning

See the section below.

Welfare and student services

The emergency plan is made known to staff and students. Pastoral care is a priority for CCL and policies on abusive behaviour and anti-bullying are referred to during the detailed student induction and reinforced through posters.

Accommodation is in dormitories in the main school building. Dormitories are generally of a satisfactory standard. However, many students had not used the drawer space for clothes, which led to the floors of some rooms being covered with open suitcases and student belongings.

Leisure opportunities were not a focus of the spot check.

Safeguarding under 18s

At the time of the inspection, all of the students were under 18. The safeguarding policy is made known to staff, all of whom have the appropriate level of training for their responsibilities. Parental consent forms include examples of the situations parents/guardians are consenting to. Safer recruitment procedures are followed and student safety is maintained at all times during the school day and at night.

Teaching and learning

Academic staff profile	Met
T1 There is a clear recruitment and support policy for the academic team relevant to the stated course objectives and student profile.	
T2 The academic manager/academic management team has an appropriate professional profile to provide academic leadership.	
T3 The teaching team has ELT/TESOL qualifications, general level of education, experience, knowledge and skills relevant to the courses they are teaching.	
Comments	
The academic staff team has a professional profile (qualifications and experience) that is appropriate to the school's context. The recruitment and support policy is effectively devised and implemented in line with the stated course objectives and the student profile. Since the 2023 inspection, CCL have appointed a full-time TEFLQ manager, who was the academic manager on the summer course.	
Academic management	Met
T4 Teachers are matched appropriately to courses and there are effective procedures for the appropriate timetabling of students, courses and classrooms.	Met
T5 There are formalised arrangements for covering for absent teachers which are satisfactory to students and staff.	Met
T6 Where enrolment is continuous, explicit attention is paid to all aspects of academic management affected.	Met
T7 There are effective arrangements for the academic induction of new teachers appropriate to their needs.	Strength
T8 There are effective arrangements, led by an academic manager, to ensure appropriate day-to-day guidance and support for all teachers.	Met
T9 There are effective arrangements for the observation and monitoring of teachers' performance by a TEFLQ academic manager based on clear standards known to teachers.	Met
T10 There are effective procedures to ensure the continuing professional development (CPD) of all teachers to meet the needs of the individual teachers, the students, and the organisation.	Met
Comments	
T7 Teachers received detailed inductions spread over three days, during which time all relevant aspects of academic arrangements are covered. T9 Detailed observations of all teachers had been conducted. T10 Teachers were happy with the support they were receiving, and professional development sessions had taken place.	
Course design and implementation	Met
T11 The course design is comprehensive and is based on the provider's stated approach to learning or educational philosophy, and is appropriate to the learning context.	Met
T12 Courses include strategies which help students to develop their language skills outside the classroom and benefit linguistically from their stay in the UK.	Met
T13 Course design is regularly reviewed in light of the different and changing needs of students and feedback from teachers and students.	Met

T14 Written course outlines and intended learning outcomes, appropriate to the course length and type, are available to students and referred to in class.	Met
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Comments

T11 Course structure is appropriate and there are measures in place for helping students develop learning strategies.

Learner management	Met
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T15 There are effective procedures for the correct placement of students, appropriate to their level and age.	Met
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T16 There are effective procedures for evaluating, monitoring and recording students' progress.	Met
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T17 Students are helped to identify their learning needs and receive support to meet course objectives.	Met
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T18 Where relevant, students are guided to select the examinations and examination training best suited to their needs and interests. Students wishing to progress to mainstream UK education have access to relevant information and advice.	N/a
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Comments

T16 Testing and leaving certificate arrangements are suitable.

Classroom observation record

Number of teachers seen	5
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Number of observations	5
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Parts of programme(s) observed	Lessons on both the junior and senior courses.
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Comments

None.

Teaching: classroom observation	Met
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T19 Teachers produce accurate models of spoken and written English; they provide clear explanations and relevant examples of language and usage, that are appropriate to the aims of the lesson and suitable for the students' level.	Met
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T20 The content of the lessons is based on the overall course objectives and takes into account the differing students' needs and backgrounds.	Met
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T21 The intended learning outcomes of lessons are made known to students, and are achieved through an appropriate sequence of activities.	Met
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T22 Teaching techniques used are appropriate to the focus of the lesson, to the context, and to the needs of the group and individual learners.	Met
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T23 Teachers enhance learning by effectively managing the classroom environment and teaching and learning resources.	Met
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T24 Students receive and benefit from appropriate and timely feedback on their performance during the lesson.	Met
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T25 Lessons include activities for teachers and students to evaluate whether learning is taking place.	Met
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T26 Teachers promote a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere and students are engaged in the lesson.	Not met
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Comments

T19 Teachers generally explained lexis and grammar effectively, and in some classes highlighted and practised pronunciation and word stress.

T20 The content of lessons was generally appropriate to the level and needs of the students.

T21 The learning outcomes were made sufficiently clear to students and written on whiteboards in most classrooms.

T22 Teachers generally used a good range of techniques and were effective at elicitation, and giving clear instructions to learners when setting up learning activities.

T23 Some teachers used the educational technology effectively, and used the whiteboards appropriately.

T24 Students generally received a lot of positive praise on their performance and were given specific feedback on both their spoken and written performance.

T25 In many classes, learning was evaluated through the use of short tasks, extended writing activities and end-of-week tests.

T26 There were positive learning atmospheres in most lessons observed. However, certain students did not speak during lessons observed, and teacher talking time was excessive in some classes. In addition, the monitoring of non task-related use of both smart phones and of L1 was inadequate in some lessons.

Action taken on points to be addressed

Points from the previous full inspection 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.

Points which must be addressed within three months

Welfare and student services

W2 (2024: W1) The school's emergency plan had not been made known to all staff.

Addressed. The emergency plan is clearly made known to staff at induction.

W4 (2024: W3) The policies and procedures for dealing with abusive behaviour were not clearly made known to students.

Addressed. Policies and procedures are clearly made known to students during their induction

Safeguarding under 18s

S1 The school's safeguarding policy does not include guidance on handling delayed suitability checks.

Addressed: Guidance on handling delayed suitability checks is included in the policy.

S3 The parental consent form does not make sufficiently clear the level of supervision of students, and when those of different ages might be unsupervised, for example, in the evenings and on excursions.

Addressed. The level of supervision is made clear.

Points which must be addressed before the spot check

Teaching and learning

T2 (2024: T3) Three of the four teachers did not hold ELT qualifications that meet Scheme requirements.

Addressed: All of the teachers have TEFL qualifications that meet Scheme requirements.

T9 (2024: T8) More structural and targeted support measures are needed.

Addressed. The academic manager is on hand to provide support when required.

T10 (2024: T9) There is insufficient monitoring to enable clear capability guidelines to be put in place to support teachers and to improve their classroom performance.

Addressed. Formal observations had taken place and academic manager comments made it clear what areas for improvement needed to be addressed.

T13 (2024: T14) No written course outlines are shared with students.

Addressed. Weekly written course outlines are displayed in classes.

T15 (2024: T11) Independent learning is not systematically included in course programmes.

Addressed. Students complete *My Learning Passport* tasks.

T23 (2024: T19) An absence of context meant the meaning and use of target language was not always clear.

Addressed. The meaning and use of target language were generally made clear.

T24 (2024: T20) There was insufficient reference to student profiles and how to accommodate their learning needs.

Addressed. Sufficient attention was paid to the learning needs of students on short summer courses.

T25 (2024: T21) Learning outcomes were not clearly identified or shared with students.

Addressed. Learning outcomes were generally made clear to students in lessons and written on boards in most classrooms.

T26 (2024: T22) There was insufficient checking of understanding and student practice.

Addressed. Teachers checked student understanding and gave clear instructions.

T27 (2024: T23) On occasion the clarity and content of board work did not support student learning.

Addressed: Board work was appropriate in the lessons observed.

T28 (2024: T24) There were frequent occasions when correction opportunities were missed.

Addressed: Sufficient attention was paid to correcting students' written and spoken production.

T30 (2024: T26) In weaker segments students were given insufficient opportunities to practise the language and there was insufficient control of the use of L1.

Not yet addressed. In the lessons observed, certain students did not speak and teacher talking time was excessive in some classes. In addition, the monitoring of non task-related use of both smart phones and of L1 was inadequate in some lessons.

Other points to be addressed

Management

M2 There are no explicit written objectives and plans, setting out the steps needed to be taken with timescales.

Addressed. An updated version of the organisation plan was presented during inspection.

M18 (2024: M17) There is no indication if the emergency contact speaks English.

Addressed. Provision now meets current requirements.

M26 (2024: M25) The publicity does not specify what the supervision arrangements are outside class time or the arrangements for a student's journey from their accommodation to the teaching centre.

Addressed. Supervision arrangements are clear and students' journeys to the school are no longer an issue, as all of the accommodation is on site.

Conclusions

The school has taken appropriate action on most of the points to be addressed, including those in the Teaching and learning section. The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme. There are no grounds for bringing forward the time of the next inspection.
