

Organisation name	Earlscliffe College, Folkestone
Inspection date	22 July 2024
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Routine: newly accredited institution Signalled: check provision not seen at inspection

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation. However, in light of the weaknesses still being addressed in relation to the academic staff profile and aspects of academic management, the committee recommended bringing forward the next full inspection to 2025.

Changes to the summary statement

No changes need to be made to the summary statement, apart from adding the date of this inspection, adding vacation courses for students aged 8–17 and changing 'sixth form college' to 'private college'.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Earlscliffe College in October 2022 and July 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 college offers residential A-level preparation and vacation courses for 8–19 year-olds.

Strengths were noted in the areas of premises and facilities, learner management, accommodation, care of students and safeguarding under 18s.

The inspection report noted a need for improvement in the area of academic staff profile.

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	2022
Last full inspection	2022
Subsequent checks/visits (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	Year-round GCSE and A Level tuition
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Summer Boarding Courses
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)	122	124
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	8	8
Typical age range	13–17	13–17
Typical length of stay	2 weeks	2 weeks
Predominant nationalities	Italian, French, Chinese, Spanish	Brazilian, Italian, German, Spanish, French
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	12	14
Total number of managers including academic	5	5

Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	17	18
Premises profile		
Address of main site	29 Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone CT20 2NB	
Additional sites in use	N/a	
Additional sites not in use	N/a	
Sites inspected	29 Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone CT20 2NB	

Introduction

Background

Earlscliffe College (EC) was first inspected and accredited in October 2022. The original EC accreditation was for their year-round courses for 16–19 year-old students and initially limited to one year. Since that inspection, EC has started running seasonal courses for students aged 8–17, which are advertised on the Summer Boarding Courses (SBC) website; summer courses were not previously advertised within the accreditation.

In addition to being a routine spot check inspection of a new provider to confirm that its accreditation could be continued, the focus of this inspection was to establish the relationship between EC and SBC and the year-round and seasonal courses. As well as sampling the summer provision, the inspector's focus was on future plans and developments and any progress made on points to be addressed.

Preparation

The spot check was carried out by one inspector, who had not been involved in the previous inspection in 2022. The inspector contacted the head office in advance to check if there were any dates which would not be suitable and when key staff would be present. The Accreditation Unit sent the inspector relevant documents and he looked at the EC and SBC websites.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 10.15 and left at 14.30. Meetings were held with the summer site director (SSD), the SBC group director (remotely), a group of students and a group of teachers. Upon arrival a range of documents was requested, all of which were provided.

Findings

Findings are reported in the following section and in the Action taken on points to be addressed.

Management

Since the last inspection, EC seasonal programmes have become more closely linked with those of SBC. Both organisations are part of the Dukes Education Group. In October 2023, the SSD, who is also the EC programme and operations manager began reporting directly to the operations director of SBC. In the future, it is planned that while EC academic programmes will continue to be run by EC, seasonal programmes will be coordinated by SBC. It is anticipated that EC and SBC will maintain their separate accreditations, although the SBC director expects to meet with the new head of EC to discuss this during the next academic year.

Teaching and learning

The academic management team consists of the SSD, the director of studies (DOS) and the senior teacher (ST). The SSD is TEFLQ, the DOS is TEFLI but does not hold a Level 6 qualification, and the ST is TEFLI with a Level 6 qualification. Five of the eleven teachers working during the week of the spot check inspection did not have TEFLI qualifications that meet Scheme requirements. Some of them held non-standard EFL qualifications, but were not receiving sufficient formal documented support or continuing professional development.

The SSD oversees the academic programme and coordinates academic management, course design, learner management and teacher support. The DOS and ST support and implement the programme. At the time of the spot check inspection, the DOS had carried out observations of all teachers under the guidance of the SSD, who intends to observe all teachers later in the summer period. The SSD also plans and delivers the academic induction. The SSD was asked to produce a recruitment and support policy during the inspection. This demonstrated some effective support relevant to the stated course objectives, but overall insufficient support for teachers holding non-standard TEFL qualifications.

Teaching and learning

Academic staff profile

Need for improvement

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

Overall, the academic staff team has a professional profile (qualifications and experience) that is not wholly appropriate to the organisation's context. Teachers have subject qualifications and backgrounds relevant to the Applied English courses offered and most have had TEFL training. Although the non-TEFLQ DoS is supported by the TEFLQ SSD, there is insufficient provision for the support and monitoring of the teachers relative to their qualifications and experience.

The recruitment and support policy is effectively devised, but not fully implemented in line with the stated course objectives and the student profile.

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.

Management

M7 The required self-evaluation against Scheme requirements was not submitted for this inspection.

Addressed. There is a full comprehensive self-evaluation document in place.

M10 There is insufficient scrutiny and awareness of the qualification requirements for ELT staff. See T1, T2, T4.

Not yet addressed. Staff files included certificates for initial TEFL qualifications which had not been appropriately evaluated and identified as not fully meeting Scheme requirements for TEFLI.

M18 (2024: M17) No record is made of students' emergency contacts' level of English.

Addressed. All contacts' level of English is now recorded.

M23 (2024: M22) The language used in publicity is not accessible to those at a B1 level of English.

Addressed. The language used on the website is now accessible.

M28 (2024: M27) The website claims that the IELTS classes are taught by 'qualified teachers'. This was not true of all three teachers employed at the time of the inspection.

Addressed. This text has been removed.

Premises and resources

P12 (2024: P11) There is no policy in place for the review and development of teaching and learning resources for the IELTS classes.

Addressed. Resources are regularly reviewed and checked according to a policy and to course leads' job descriptions.

Teaching and learning

T1 (2024: T2) The academic manager does not have a Level 6 or Level 7 qualification. See also T4.

Not yet addressed. The appointed director of studies' file has no record of a Level 6 or Level 7 qualification.

T2 (2024: T3) Of the three IELTS teachers, two did not have TEFLI qualifications that meet Scheme requirements.

Not yet addressed. Five of the eleven teachers working during the week of the spot check inspection did not have TEFLI qualifications that meet Scheme requirements.

T3 (2024: T2) The academic manager is not TEFLQ, does not have a Level 6 qualification, and her certificate level TEFL qualification does not meet Scheme requirements.

Not yet addressed. The appointed director of studies' file has no record of a Level 6 or Level 7 qualification. The SSD has taken charge of the academic programme, but does not have sufficient time to do this effectively.

T10 (2024: T9) There is no TEFLQ manager in place to carry out the observations and monitoring of teachers' performance.

Not yet addressed. All teachers have been observed by the non-TEFLQ director of studies.

Conclusions

This spot check inspection took place at the beginning of a transition for the school and before SBC policies and procedures have been implemented. There has been good progress on some of the points to be addressed in the management section. However, the recruitment and employment of staff who do not meet Scheme requirements remains an issue for the school. The school must develop systems to ensure that appropriately qualified academic staff are recruited and that those systems are effectively monitored.
