

Inspection report

Organisation name	Islington Centre for English, London
Inspection date	23–24 April 2024

Section standards	
Management The management of the provision operates to the benefit of the students, and in accordance with the provider's stated goals, values, and publicity.	Met
Premises and resources The premises provide students and staff with a safe, comfortable and professional environment for work and relaxation. A range of learning resources is available, appropriate to the age and needs of the students. Guidance on the use of these resources is provided for staff and students where needed.	Met
Teaching and learning The academic staff team has a professional profile (qualifications, experience and continuing professional development) appropriate to the context. Teachers receive sufficient guidance to ensure that they support students effectively in their learning. Courses are structured and managed to provide the maximum possible benefit to students. The teaching observed meets the requirements of the Scheme.	Met
Welfare and student services The provision meets the needs of the students for security, pastoral care, information and leisure activities. Students benefit from well-managed student services, including, where offered, out-of-class activities and suitable accommodation.	Met
Safeguarding under 18s There is appropriate provision for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 within the organisation and in any leisure activities or accommodation provided.	Met

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation.

Summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited the Islington Centre for English in April 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 adults (18+) and young people (16+) and for closed groups of under 18s (11+).

The inspection report noted a need for improvement in the area of leisure opportunities.

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

Introduction

The Islington Centre for English was founded in 2004. It is located in two adjoining buildings in Islington, central London, close to Angel underground station. The school offers courses for adults (18+) and young people (16+). Most of the school's students are working and living in London. Courses are also offered to closed groups of juniors aged 11 to 15.

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors and took one and a half days. They held meetings with the owner/director, the director of studies, the head of administration, the groups co-ordinator and the leisure programme co-ordinator. In addition, they held a teacher focus group and a student focus group, including under 18s. All six teachers timetabled to teach during the week of the inspection were observed. One inspector spoke by phone to the agency responsible for providing the majority of the homestay accommodation.

Address of main site

97 and 98 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF

Description of sites visited

The school is located in two adjacent three-storey buildings. Each is accessed via a keypad entry system but there are no internal joining doors. One building contains six classrooms, two toilets and the reception area including the administration office where the receptionist, groups leader and director of administration are based. The other building has five classrooms, the staffroom, the director of studies' office, the owner/director's office and two toilets. Both buildings have quiet study rooms for students. Rooms can be rented out in the evening to other educational providers. Where possible, under 18s are only timetabled in one building.

Course profile	Year round		Vacation only	
	Run	Seen	Run	Seen
General ELT for adults (18+)				
General ELT for adults (18+) and young people (16+)	\boxtimes	\boxtimes		
General ELT for juniors (under 18)	\boxtimes			
English for academic purposes (excludes IELTS preparation)				
English for specific purposes (includes English for Executives)	\boxtimes			
Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)				
Teacher development (excludes award-bearing courses)				
ESOL skills for life/for citizenship				
Other				

Comments

Classes for adults (18+) and young people (16+) are offered at all levels from elementary to advanced. At the time of the inspection, preparation courses leading to externally validated exams were also running, as well as a conversation club. Classes take place in the mornings, afternoon, and evenings. Students can choose to study during one time slot or more. In addition, students who have other commitments are given the option of studying part-time for one or more days per week; they join existing classes with full-time students. Closed groups for juniors are also run at different times of year.

Management profile

The owner/director is based in the school and has overall responsibility. He manages the head of administration and the director of studies, as well as the IT support. The head of administration manages the accommodation and general organisation of the school, and the director of studies manages the teaching team.

Accommodation profile

Homestay accommodation is offered through an agency registered with the British Council. At the time of the inspection, four adult students were in homestay accommodation. Accommodation is also offered in house shares and residences through other providers, although no students were staying in this accommodation at the time of the inspection. The school has produced an information sheet to help students find their own accommodation.

Summary of inspection findings

Management

The provision generally meets the section standard. However, there is little evidence of future planning, and feedback procedures are not always effective. The required systems for strategic as well as staff management are in place. Student administration systems are suitable, and publicity generally gives an accurate description of the school although some claims about the school are not evidence-based.

Premises and resources

The provision meets the section standard. The premises provide a suitable location and environment for students and feature elements of attractive design. Appropriate teaching and learning resources are available.

Teaching and learning

The provision meets the section standard. The profile and deployment of the academic team is suitable to the particular needs of their learners. Teachers receive an effective induction and very good support from the director of studies. Course design is personalised to the needs of individual students. The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme.

Welfare and student services

The provision meets the section standard. The needs of students for security, pastoral care and accommodation are met. However, some third parties are not made sufficiently aware of the emergency plan. The leisure programme is not routinely risk-assessed, staff leading activities are not routinely briefed on potential risks, and there are few leisure opportunities for students under the age of 18 on adult courses. There is a need for improvement in *Leisure opportunities*.

Safeguarding under 18s

The provision meets the section standard. There is generally appropriate provision for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 within the organisation and in any leisure activities or accommodation provided. However, references were not on file for many teaching staff, and the safeguarding policy is not shared with accommodation providers.

Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance

Sampling of documentation revealed issues in relation to the *Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance* which the provider has been asked to follow up.

Evidence

Management

Met
Met
Not met
Met
Met
Not met
Met
Met

Comments

M2 There are no written plans for the future of the organisation which meet the Scheme's requirements. M5 The rate of student feedback is inadequate and there are no written records of initial course feedback.

Staff management and development	Met
M8 The provider implements appropriate human resources policies, which are made known to staff.	Met
M9 The provider specifies the duties of all staff working with ELT students, and ensures that these are up to date.	Met
M10 There are effective procedures for the recruitment and selection of all staff.	Met
M11 There are effective induction procedures for all staff.	Met
M12 There are effective procedures for monitoring and appraising all staff, for highlighting good performance, and for handling unsatisfactory performance or conduct. These procedures are made known to all staff.	Met
M13 There are effective procedures to ensure the continuing professional development (CPD) of all staff to meet the needs of the individual, the students and the organisation.	Met
Comments	

All the criteria in the above area are met.

Student administration	Met
M14 Staff are helpful and courteous to students and their representatives and provide good levels of customer service.	Strength
M15 Students or their representatives receive sufficient information and advice on their course choices before arrival and during their stay.	Strength
M16 There are clear systems in place to enrol students effectively and maintain accurate information about student payment and course details. This information is readily accessible to relevant staff.	Met
M17 There are effective systems to maintain up-to-date and accessible records of local contact details for students, and their designated emergency contacts.	Met
M18 There is a clear and effective policy on student attendance and punctuality that is known to all staff and students and is applied consistently.	Met
M19 All staff and students are made aware of conditions and procedures under which a student may be asked to leave the course.	Met
M20 All students and, where appropriate, group leaders and parents/legal guardians, receive information in writing about who to see about problems and how to make a complaint.	Met

Comments

M14 Students commented very positively regarding the level of customer service they receive. They stressed the approachability and helpfulness of the team in general. The owner/director routinely makes contact with all students in the school.

M15 All students receive personalised welcome information packs upon booking and arrival. Highly experienced staff are available to provide advice on course choices before arrival and during students' stay.

Not met
Met
Not met

Comments

The publicity consists of a website with downloadable PDF brochures and the use of social media channels.

M21 Some claims the school makes about student progress are not based on external exam results or an independent evaluation of their courses and could give rise to unrealistic expectations.

M28 An inaccurate accreditation marque is still being used in publicity, on notices and in other documentation

Premises and resources

Premises and facilities	Met
P1 Providers ensure the safety and security of students on their premises by measures appropriate to their age and background, and the location.	Not met
P2 Premises, including any external areas, are in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration, and provide a comfortable environment for students and staff.	Strength
P3 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Met
P4 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Met
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display or sharing of general information.	Met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for work, meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions.	Met

Comments

P1 The lock on one front door was not working properly, allowing uncontrolled access from the street. This was fixed during the inspection and so is no longer a point to be addressed.

P2 The premises are in a very good state of repair and provide an attractive and comfortable environment for students and staff.

Learning resources	Met
P7 There are sufficient learning resources for classroom use for the number of students enrolled, appropriate to their age and the level, length and type of courses offered.	Met
P8 There are appropriate resources for teachers, which are adequate in number, accessible, and well maintained and organised.	Met
P9 Any educational technology inside the classroom and elsewhere is well maintained with adequate technical support. Staff receive appropriate training in using the available technology to support learning.	Met
P10 Students have access to resources for independent learning, relevant to their learning aims and expectations.	Met
P11 There is a policy for the continuing review and development of teaching and learning resources, and evidence of its implementation.	Met
	Met

Comments

All the criteria in the above area are fully met.

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.

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	Met

satisfactory to students and staff.	
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.	Strength
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 The academic induction is very thorough and recently appointed teachers commented favourably on this as well as the face-to-face element of the process.

T8 The teachers were very positive regarding the support they receive from the DoS. His experience as a teacher trainer, academic manager and teacher together with his supportive manner are appreciated by the teaching team.

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
Comments	

All the criteria in the above area are fully met.

Learner management	Met
T15 There are effective procedures for the correct placement of students, appropriate to their level and age.	Met
T16 There are effective procedures for evaluating, monitoring and recording students' progress.	Strength
T17 Students are helped to identify their learning needs and receive support to meet course objectives.	Met
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.	Met

Comments

T16 Students are tested on a regular basis and scores are recorded in a way that supports student and teacher awareness of progress.

Classroom observation record

Number of teachers seen	6
Number of observations	6
Parts of programme(s) observed	General English at different levels.

Comments

None.

Teaching: classroom observation	Met
T19 Teachers produce accurate models of spoken and written English; they provide clear	Met

explanations and relevant examples of language and usage, that are appropriate to the aims of the lesson and suitable for the students' level.	
T20 The content of the lessons is based on the overall course objectives and takes into account the differing students' needs and backgrounds.	Met
T21 The intended learning outcomes of lessons are made known to students, and are achieved through an appropriate sequence of activities.	Met
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
T23 Teachers enhance learning by effectively managing the classroom environment and teaching and learning resources.	Met
T24 Students receive and benefit from appropriate and timely feedback on their performance during the lesson.	Not met
T25 Lessons include activities for teachers and students to evaluate whether learning is taking place.	Strength
T26 Teachers promote a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere and students are engaged in the lesson.	Met

Comments

- T19 Teachers generally provided clear models, explanations and examples, appropriate to both level and context. T20 Although some classes contained students at different levels, lesson content and materials were based on group needs and background, as well as overall course aims.
- T21 Learning outcomes were displayed in most lessons, sometimes referred to, and worked towards with logical staging and sequencing of activities.
- T22 A range of teaching techniques was seen. Elicitation was used confidently, and in some cases new language was drilled effectively at sentence level. Concept checking was also used well in most of the segments seen. T23 Teachers enhanced learning by effectively managing the classroom environment and teaching and learning resources.
- T24 Overall there was insufficient corrective feedback to promote learning and increased understanding.
- T25 All lesson plans included a feedback and evaluation stage at the end of the lesson and good examples were seen of teachers encouraging the students to reflect on what they had learned.
- T26 Teachers generally created a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere, and students were highly engaged with their learning. In the focus group, students expressed good levels of satisfaction with their classroom experience.

Welfare and student services

Care of students	Met
W1 There is a comprehensive plan to respond to any emergency. This plan is known to all staff, and relevant elements are known to students.	Not met
W2 Students receive pastoral care appropriate to their age, background and circumstances. All staff and students know the name(s) of the person or people who deal with students' personal problems.	Met
W3 There are policies to promote tolerance and respect, and procedures for dealing with any abusive behaviour. All staff and students are aware of these.	Met
W4 Where relevant, students receive a 24-hour emergency contact number for the provider, in writing.	Met
W5 Students receive advice on relevant aspects of travel to and life in the UK.	Met
W6 Students have access to adequate health care provision.	Met

W1 There is a comprehensive plan to respond to emergencies and this is known to staff and students as appropriate. However, plans are not shared with the main partner accommodation agency and other accommodation partners, but this was remedied during the inspection and is therefore no longer a point to be addressed.

Accommodation (W7–W18 as applicable)	Met
All accommodation	

Comments

W7 Students have a comfortable living environment throughout their stay.	Met
W8 Arrangements for cleaning and laundry are satisfactory.	Met
W9 A responsible representative inspects all accommodation (for safety and suitability) before students are placed, and at least every two years after that.	Met
W10 Students receive written confirmation of accommodation booked, giving clear and accurate information.	Met
W11 There are effective procedures for identifying and resolving any problems students have with their accommodation.	Met
W12 Accommodation providers receive written confirmation of the rules, terms and conditions applied by the provider with respect to the provision of accommodation services.	Met
W13 Students receive meals as agreed; these offer a well-balanced diet, taking into account any reasonable dietary requirements students may have.	Met
Comments	

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All criteria in the above area are fully met.

Accommodation: homestay only	
W14 Homestay hosts comply with the agreed terms and conditions for student placements.	Met
W15 Homestay placements encourage students to use English.	Met
W16 Hosts ensure that there is an adult available to receive students on first arrival.	Met
Comments	

All the criteria in the above area are fully met.

Accommodation: other	
W17 Students receive information about the implications of their living in private rented accommodation and advice in case of difficulties.	Met
W18 The provider monitors any other accommodation recommended, and booking and payment arrangements are clear.	Met
Comments	

All the criteria in the above area are fully met.

Leisure opportunities	Need for improvement
W19 Students have appropriate information about and access to social, cultural and sporting events and activities which enhance their experience of studying in the UK.	Met
W20 The content of any leisure programme is appropriate to the age and interests of the students.	Not met
W21 Any leisure programmes are well organised and sufficiently resourced.	Met
W22 There are effective systems to ensure the health and safety of students on all on-site and off-site activities.	Not met
W23 Staff supervising sporting and leisure activities on or off-site have appropriate experience, support and training.	Not met
Comments	

Comments

W20 Although the leisure programme is appreciated by the adult students, there is no or very limited appropriate provision for 16 to 17-year-olds.

W22 Many activities offered on the general English programme did not have risk assessments on file. Staff leading activities report that risk assessments for activities are not routinely shared with them.

W23 There is limited support and insufficient training for staff leading activities.

Safeguarding under 18s

Safeguarding under 18s	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.	Strength
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.	Not 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.	Not 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.	Met
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

At the time of the inspection there were five students under 18 studying on the general English programme. All of these students were staying in their own accommodation with local relatives or friends. In the summer there is a junior programme offered to groups and accompanied individual students aged 11 to 15. Groups of under 18s are also accepted at other times of the year, but none have been booked in the past 12 months. If needed, homestay accommodation is arranged with the registered accommodation agency.

- S1 The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and well thought through and is reviewed annually by the two safeguarding leads.
- S2 The safeguarding policy is not shared with the accommodation agency or other accommodation providers. This was remedied during the inspection and is no longer a point to be addressed.
- S4 Recruitment records are not in line with safer recruitment good practice or the school's safeguarding policy. Apart from some teaching staff recruited in the past eight months, references are not on file for most staff. Confirmation of group leader police checks is also not on file.

Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance

D1 The organisation certifies that it operates at all times in accordance with the declarations in the *Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance*.

The Accreditation Scheme requires accredited providers to comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Providers must take steps to ensure that they are aware of, and comply with, all existing and new legal requirements.

On initial application and annual renewal of accreditation, providers are required to confirm that they are complying with all applicable laws and regulations.

Inspectors will check a random sample of items during inspection, in relation to criterion D1; if they find evidence of a breach of statutory or other legal requirements, the provider will be required to submit evidence of compliance confirmed by the appropriate regulatory body.

Any breach of the law or regulations will be viewed seriously by the Scheme and may result in the withdrawal or withholding of accreditation.

Any sustained breach of the law or regulations which an accredited provider fails upon reasonable notice to remedy will result in accreditation being withdrawn.

Comments

D1 Sampling identified the following issues: No guidelines were made available to teachers regarding limits to photocopying. The government health and safety at work poster was not displayed.

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2007
Last full inspection	2019
Subsequent checks/visits (if applicable)	N/a
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this	N/a

centre	
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a

Private sector

Date of foundation	September 2005
Ownership	Name of company: Islington Centre for English Ltd Company number: 06042054
Other accreditation/inspection	N/a

Premises profile

Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the	N/a
inspection but not visited/observed	
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of	N/a
the inspection	

Student profile	At inspection	Estimate at peak
ELT/ESOL students (eligible courses)	At inspection	July
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) 18 years and over	35	50
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) aged 16–17 years	1	5
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) aged under 16	0	0
Part-time ELT aged 18 years and over	64	150
Part-time ELT aged 16–17 years	4	0
Part-time ELT aged under 16 years	0	15
Overall total ELT/ESOL students shown above	104	220
Adult programmes: advertised minimum age	16	16
Adult programmes: typical age range	18–28	16–28
Adult programmes: typical length of stay	6 weeks	4 weeks
Adult programmes: predominant nationalities	Brazilian, Turkish, Japanese, Italian, French	Brazilian, Turkish, Japanese, Italian, French
Junior programmes: advertised minimum age	11	11
Junior programmes: advertised maximum age	15	15
Junior programmes: typical length of stay	2 weeks	2 weeks
Junior programmes: predominant nationalities	Spanish, Russian, Italian, Brazilian	Spanish, Russian, Italian, Brazilian

Staff profile	At inspection	Estimate at peak
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	6	10
Number teaching ELT 20 hours and over a week	4	
Number teaching ELT under 20 hours a week	2	
Number of academic managers for eligible ELT courses	1	1
Number of management (non-academic) and administrative staff working on eligible ELT courses	2	
Total number of support staff	2	

Academic manager qualifications profile

Profile at inspection	
Professional qualifications	Number of academic managers
TEFLQ qualification and at least three years' full-time relevant teaching experience	1
Academic managers without TEFLQ qualification or three years' relevant experience	0
Total	1
Comments	
None.	

Teacher qualifications profile

Profile in week of inspection	
Professional qualifications	Number of teachers
TEFLQ qualification/profile	0
TEFLI qualification	6
ATEFL portfolio in progress	0
Non-ELT-related qualified teacher status only (for short courses for under 18s)	0
Holding specialist qualifications only (for ESP/CLIL)	0
Alternative professional profile	0
Total	6
Comments	

None.

Accommodation profile

Accommodation prome		
Number of students in each at the time of inspection (all	students on eligible courses)	
Types of accommodation	Adults	Under 18s
Arranged by provider/agency		
Homestay	4	0
Private home	0	0
Home tuition	0	0
Residential	0	0
Hotel/guesthouse	0	0
Independent self-catering e.g. flats, bedsits, student houses	95	0
Arranged by student/family/guardian		
Staying with own family	0	5
Staying in privately rented rooms/flats	0	0
Overall totals adults/under 18s	99	5
Overall total adults + under 18s	104	

Items requiring early action

Evidence must be submitted within three months to demonstrate that weaknesses in W22 and S4 have been addressed.