



Organisation name	Meridian School of English Plymouth
Inspection date	3-4 August 2023

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 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. However, evidence must be submitted within three months to demonstrate that weaknesses in publicity, W2, W4, S2 and S4 have been addressed. The required evidence was subsequently submitted.

Summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited Meridian School of English in August 2023. 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 was a compliance-only inspection during which the inspectors focused only on whether inspection criteria were met or not met. Inspectors did not evaluate the extent to which requirements were exceeded and no strengths were awarded. No new summary statement has been issued; please refer to the last inspection report for any areas of strength previously awarded.

The inspection report stated that the organisation met the standards of the Scheme. However a need for improvement in the area of publicity was noted.

Introduction

The Meridian School of English, Plymouth is part of the Tellus Education Group. Previously a face-to-face school, it has refashioned itself as principally an online provider of courses for young learners. The Tellus group has a second Meridian school, in Portsmouth, and has further education activity in Spain.

This compliance-only inspection, which was conducted remotely, took two days. The inspection included a virtual tour of the premises used by the school.

Meetings were held with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Tellus Group, the operations manager, the director of studies (DoS) and the human resources officer. A focus group meeting was held with teachers.

Address of main site/head office

Ocean Studios, Royal William Yard, Plymouth PL1 3RP

Description of sites visited/observed

While nearly all of the provision is online, the school occasionally delivers bespoke face-to-face courses. It rents a classroom in the three-storey Swarthmore Centre, which is on Mutley Plain, a busy road of shops and cafes, north of the station. The building is owned by the Religious Society of Friends and rooms are rented from them. Access is via a camera-controlled locked front door. For larger groups, premises are rented from the University of Plymouth.

Course profile	Year round		Vacation only	
	Run	Seen	Run	Seen
General ELT for adults (18+)				
General ELT for adults (18+) and young people (16+)				
General ELT for juniors (under 18)		\square		
English for academic purposes (excludes IELTS preparation)				
English for specific purposes (includes English for Executives)		\square		
Teacher development (excludes award-bearing courses)				
ESOL skills for life/for citizenship				
Other				
2				

Comments

The school runs online general English courses for small groups (maximum six students) of juniors (5–15) banded into age groups (5–6, 7–9, 10–12 and 13–15). Classes are of 30 minutes for the lower age groups and 45 minutes for the higher; online students typically join classes three or five times a week. All online classes are recorded. Tailored face-to-face courses are provided on request for closed groups of adults (18+).

Management profile

The senior managers, including the operations manager, the net developer/overseas manager and the HR officer, report to the CEO. The DoS, who supervises the teachers, reports to the operations manager.

Accommodation profile

No accommodation is offered.

Summary of inspection findings

Management

The provision meets the section standard. The management of the provision generally operates to the benefit of the students and staff. The structure of the organisation is well established, communication is good and administrative processes are carried out efficiently and effectively. There is a need for improvement in *Publicity*.

Premises and resources

The provision meets the section standard. The building occasionally used by the school is in good condition. The classroom seen was of a good size and there is ample space for students and staff to work and relax. There is a range of teaching and learning resources, especially for the online provision, and the technology available and used meets the needs of students and teachers. There is no review system for acquiring new and replacing old

resources.

Teaching and learning

The provision meets the section standard. The academic staff team has a professional profile which is well matched to the context. Course design and learner management are effective. Teachers receive good support, and overall courses are managed to provide the maximum possible benefit to students. The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme.

Welfare and student services

The provision meets the section standard. Students benefit from generally well managed student services and their needs for security and pastoral care are met. Some policies, however, are not currently shared with staff.

Safeguarding under 18s

The provision meets the section standard. Safeguarding of students under the age of 18 is generally effective, although weaknesses in safer recruitment and communicating policies to staff need to be addressed.

Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance

The items sampled were satisfactory

Evidence

Management

Strategic and quality management	Met
M1 There is a clear statement describing the goals and values of the organisation, which is made known to all staff.	Met
M2 The management has clear objectives for the future of the organisation and has realistic plans to achieve them.	Met
M3 There is a documented and clearly understood structure for the ELT operation. There are sufficient staff to manage and deliver the provision, and to ensure continuity at all times.	Met
M4 There are effective channels of communication between all involved in the ELT operation, and between the ELT operation and any wider organisation of which it is a part.	Met
M5 The provider regularly obtains and records feedback from students on all the services offered. Feedback is circulated to relevant staff and appropriate action is taken and recorded.	Met
M6 The provider regularly seeks and records feedback from all staff on the services offered. Appropriate action is taken and recorded.	Not met
M7 The provider reviews systems, processes and practices with a view to continuing improvement. Appropriate action is taken and recorded in an annual self-evaluation.	Met
Comments	

Comments

Strategic and quality management are generally well assured, although staff feedback is not systematically sought and recorded. The ELT structure is clear and there are sufficient staff. Communication networks, all of them online as staff work from home, are well established and comprehensive. There is a dynamic system of review and renewal.

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 regularly reviews these.	Met
M10 There are effective procedures for the recruitment and selection of all staff.	Not met
M11 There are effective induction procedures for all staff.	Met
M12 There are effective procedures for monitoring and appraising all staff, and for handling unsatisfactory performance or conduct. These procedures are made known to all staff.	Not met
M13 There are effective procedures to ensure the continuing professional development of all staff to meet the needs of the individual, the students and the organisation.	Met
Comments	

Report expires 31 March 2028 Post MA

Human resources policies and procedures are in place, although recruitment processes are not sufficiently robust, resulting in incomplete staff files. Staff are inducted to the company well and continuing professional development is available to all. There is currently no staff appraisal system in place.

Student administration	Met
M14 Staff are helpful and courteous to students and their representatives, and provide satisfactory levels of customer service.	Met
M15 Students or their representatives receive sufficient information and advice on their course choices before arrival and during their stay.	Met
M16 Staff carry out enrolment, cancellation and refund procedures efficiently, fairly, and with appropriate sensitivity.	Met
M17 There are effective systems in place to maintain accurate and up-to-date records of student enrolment, payment and course details. These records are accessible at all times to authorised staff.	Met
M18 There are effective systems to maintain up-to-date and accessible records of local contact details for students, and their designated emergency contacts.	Met
M19 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
M20 All staff and students are made aware of conditions and procedures under which a student may be asked to leave the course.	Met
M21 All students and, where appropriate, group leaders and parents/legal guardians, receive information in writing about how to make a complaint.	Met
Commonts	

Comments

There is a range of channels for informing pre-enrolment students. These include the website and information channels from agents and partners overseas. Once enrolled, they are informed through the student portal. Student administration is through the staff portal and a customer relations software package. Attendance and punctuality measures vary according to delivery mode; face-to-face students are asked to wait outside the class if they arrive late while there are no sanctions for late arriving online students. The complaints procedure is clear and detailed.

Publicity	Need for improvement
M22 All publicity and information is accurate, and gives rise to realistic expectations about the premises, location, and the extent and availability of the services and resources.	Not met
M23 All publicity and information about the provider and the services it offers is in clear, accurate and accessible English.	Not met
M24 Publicity gives clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on the courses.	Met
M25 Publicity includes clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on costs.	Met
M26 Publicity or other information made available before enrolment gives an accurate description of the level of care and support given to any students under 18.	Met
M27 Publicity gives an accurate description of any accommodation offered.	N/a
M28 Descriptions of staff qualifications are accurate.	Not met
M29 Claims to accreditation are in line with Scheme requirements.	Met
Comments	

Comments

The main medium of publicity is the website. Social media channels are also used.

The publicity is generally attractive and easily navigated. Information about courses and costs is accurate, clear and easy to find. However, uncaptioned pictures while representative of the school's history are not representative of current provision and claims that the school is the 'best online English school' and has 'the most effective methodology' are not supported by evidence. Some language is well above B1 level and there are a number of language errors. Moreover, the website asserts that the school's teachers are all 'Cambridge University or Trinity College London qualified' and are 'highly qualified'. Neither assertion is accurate.

Premises and resources

Premises and facilities	Met
P1 Premises, including any external areas, are in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration, and provide a comfortable environment for students and staff.	Met
P2 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Met
P3 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Met
P4 Free drinking water is available. A choice of appropriate food at affordable prices is available to students on site, if not available locally.	Met
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display of general information.	Met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions, and for teachers to carry out their preparation and marking.	Met
Comments	

The classroom and associated premises being used in the Swarthmore Centre were entirely appropriate.

Met
Met
Not met
Met
N/a
N/a
Not met

Comments

Learning resources for students are appropriate to their profile and needs, although resources for teachers are sparse and some are in need of an update. There is no policy regarding the review and development of resources.

Teaching and learning

Academic staff profile	Met
T1 All academic staff have a level of education normally represented by a Level 6 qualification on the Ofqual register of regulated qualifications.	Met
T2 The teaching team has ELT/TESOL qualifications relevant to the courses they are teaching.	Met
T3 The teaching team has a range of experience, knowledge and skills appropriate to the courses offered and the needs of the learners.	Met
T4 The academic manager/academic management team has an appropriate professional profile to provide academic leadership.	Met
Comments	

Comments

T1 Two of the teachers who were teaching during the inspection did not have a Level 6 qualification. A policy rationale was offered for them and was accepted in the context of this inspection.

Academic management	Met
T5 Teachers are matched appropriately to courses.	Met
T6 There are effective procedures for the appropriate timetabling of students, teachers, courses and classrooms.	Met
T7 There are formalised arrangements, satisfactory to students and staff, for covering for absent teachers.	Met

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T8 Where enrolment is continuous, explicit attention is paid to all aspects of academic management affected.	Met
T9 There are effective arrangements, led by an academic manager, to ensure appropriate day-to-day guidance and support for all teachers.	Met
T10 There are effective arrangements for the observation and monitoring of teachers' performance by a TEFLQ academic manager.	Met

Comments

Teachers are matched to courses according to their experience and preferences. If they need to be assigned to a relatively unfamiliar age group, support is provided. Teachers reported that they were very well supported by the recently appointed DoS. She had observed informally all current teachers by looking at recordings of their classes and had carried out more formal 'live' observations of all recently appointed teachers; teachers had received feedback.

Course design and implementation	Met
T11 Course design is based on stated principles. There is a coherent and appropriate course structure described in writing for teachers' guidance.	Met
T12 Course design is regularly reviewed in light of the different and changing needs of students and feedback from teachers and students.	Met
T13 Written course outlines and intended learning outcomes, appropriate to the course length and type, are available to students.	Met
T14 Any activities additional to English classes, and which form part of the language curriculum, encourage the acquisition of language and the development of relevant language skills.	N/a
T15 Courses include study and learning strategies that support independent learning and enable students to benefit from their programmes and continue their learning after the course.	Met
T16 Courses include strategies which help students to develop their language skills outside the classroom and benefit linguistically from their stay in the UK.	Met

Comments

Course design is primarily coursebook based, supported by a syllabus planner for different levels; it is age appropriate. Learning outcomes are made known to students at the start of each class. Learning strategies are included in course design through the coursebooks in use and the syllabus planner.

Learner management	Met
T17 There are effective procedures for the correct placement of students, appropriate to their level and age.	Not met
T18 There are effective procedures for evaluating, monitoring and recording students' progress.	Not met
T19 Students are provided with learning support and enabled to change courses or classes where necessary.	Met
T20 Where relevant, students are guided to select the examinations and examination training best suited to their needs and interests.	N/a
T21 Academic reports are made available to students on request and, in the case of under 18s, to their parents/guardians.	Met
T22 Students wishing to progress to mainstream UK education have access to relevant information and advice.	N/a

Comments

Online testing is not currently followed by a speaking assessment. This leads to more class changes than would otherwise be necessary. Procedures for evaluating, monitoring and recording students' progress have been identified as a priority target but are not yet in place.

Classroom observation record

Number of teachers seen	11
Number of observations	11
Parts of programme(s) observed	Online junior classes and a bespoke face-to-face class in Plymouth
Comments	

One online teacher could not be observed because of technical difficulties.

Teaching: classroom observation	Met
T23 Teachers demonstrate sound knowledge and awareness of the use of English and the linguistic systems underlying it, and provide appropriate models of both spoken and written English.	Met
T24 The content of the lessons shows that the course objectives, the learning needs and cultural backgrounds of the students have been taken into account.	Met
T25 Lessons lead to relevant learning outcomes, made known to students and achieved through a coherent sequence of activities.	Met
T26 Teaching techniques are appropriate to the focus of the lesson and to the needs of the group and individual learners.	Met
T27 Teachers promote learning by the effective management of the classroom environment and resources.	Met
T28 Students receive appropriate and timely feedback on their performance during the lesson.	Met
T29 Lessons include activities to evaluate whether learning is taking place.	Met
T30 Teachers demonstrate the ability to engage students and create a positive learning atmosphere.	Met

Comments

T23 Teachers provided accurate models of spoken and written language. They resisted the temptation, when speaking slowly for very low level students, of allowing the slow speed to deform the language phonologically. T24 There was a clear focus on the learning needs and motivation of the students and attention was paid to cultural differences.

T25 Lesson plans included appropriate learning outcomes, although these were sometimes given as teaching aims. T26 A range of techniques was observed: for example, eliciting, questioning, nominating. Effective use was made of prompts, interactive activities and games. Instructions were clear and checked with students. Some oral practice of new vocabulary was observed but students were not given enough targeted pronunciation practice.

T27 Technological resources were used effectively. Teachers were adept at highlighting text on screen by ringing or shading it.

T28 Teachers monitored well. Some feedback on oral errors was given by prompting self-correction and providing a correct model. But some opportunities were missed to pick up on students' pronunciation errors and to provide follow-up practice.

T29 Lesson plans included 'fun' tasks and activities to assess whether learning had taken place. There was reference to work done previously and to what had been learned in the current lesson.

T30 Teachers created a very positive and purposeful learning atmosphere; students were, for the most part attentive and engaged. At times, though, some students did not find their class stimulating enough and were clearly bored.

Classroom observation summary

The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme and ranged from very good to satisfactory against the criteria with the majority being satisfactory. Teachers demonstrated sound grammatical awareness and provided clear models of the language. Lessons had been planned with clear knowledge of students and with their needs and interests at the forefront. The techniques used were appropriate, and resources were managed effectively. Teachers had given some thought to the evaluation of learning; gave useful feedback to learners; and created in most cases a very positive learning atmosphere.

Welfare and student services

Care of students	Met
W1 Providers ensure the safety and security of students on their premises by measures appropriate to their age and background, and the location.	Met
W2 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
W3 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
W4 There are policies to promote tolerance and respect, and procedures for dealing with any abusive behaviour. All staff and students are aware of these.	Not met
W5 Where relevant, students receive a 24-hour emergency contact number for the	Met

provider, in writing.	
W6 Students receive in advance information on the most appropriate forms of transport between the point of entry to the UK and the provider or accommodation, including approximate costs.	Met
W7 Students receive advice on relevant aspects of life in the UK.	Met
W8 Students have access to adequate health care provision.	Met

Comments

The welfare of students is generally well managed, although policies and procedures are not shared with staff. Students receive appropriate information.

Accommodation (W9–W22 as applicable)	N/a
All accommodation	
W9 Students have a comfortable living environment throughout their stay.	N/a
W10 Arrangements for cleaning and laundry are satisfactory.	N/a
W11 A responsible representative inspects all accommodation (for safety and suitability)before students are placed, and at least every two years after that.	N/a
W12 Students receive written confirmation of accommodation booked, giving clear and accurate information.	N/a
W13 There are effective procedures for identifying and resolving any problems students have with their accommodation.	N/a
W14 Accommodation providers receive written confirmation of the rules, terms and conditions applied by the provider with respect to the provision of accommodation services.	N/a
W15 Students receive meals as agreed; these offer a well-balanced diet, taking into account any reasonable dietary requirements students may have.	N/a
Comments	

No accommodation is offered.

Accommodation: homestay only	
W16 Homestay hosts accommodate no more than four students at one time.	N/a
W17 Homestay hosts do not accommodate more than one student with the same language, unless the students, their agents, parents or legal guardians specifically request this in writing.	N/a
W18 No more than two students share the same bedroom, unless the students, their agents, parents or legal guardians specifically request this in writing.	N/a
W19 English is the language of communication within the homestay home.	N/a
W20 Hosts ensure that there is an adult available to receive students on first arrival.	N/a
Comments	

None.

Accommodation: other	
W21 Students receive information about the implications of their living in private rented accommodation and advice in case of difficulties.	N/a
W22 The provider monitors any other accommodation recommended, and booking and payment arrangements are clear.	N/a
Comments	

None.

Leisure opportunities	Met
W23 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
W24 The content of any leisure programme is appropriate to the age and interests of the students.	N/a
W25 Any leisure programmes are well organised and sufficiently resourced.	N/a
W26 There are effective systems to ensure the health and safety of students on all on-site	N/a

and off-site activities.	
W27 Staff supervising sporting and leisure activities on or off-site have appropriate experience and training.	N/a
Comments	
No leisure programme is offered.	

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.	Met
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.	N/a
S7 There are suitable arrangements for the accommodation of students.	N/a
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

All online students are under 18. Face-to-face students are usually adults, although the school plans to run a summer school for under 18s in future years.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place; however, the safeguarding policy is not currently shared with staff. Safer recruitment procedure is not followed and staff files are missing relevant checks and documentation.

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 The items sampled were satisfactory.

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2008
Last full inspection	2017
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	N/a
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Meridian English Portsmouth
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Tellus Spain SL

Private sector	
Date of foundation	1995
Ownership	Name of company: Tellus Education Group Ltd Company number: 03029969
Other accreditation/inspection	N/a
Premises profile	
Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection but not visited/observed	N/a
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of	Swarthmore Institute
the inspection	1 classroom
	Used in August 2023
	University of Plymouth
	4 classrooms
	Residential accommodation
	Last used August 2022

Student profile	At inspection	In peak week: August 2023
ELT/ESOL students (eligible courses)	At inspection	In peak week
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) 18 years and over	0	0
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) aged 16–17 years	0	0
Full-time ELT (15+ hours per week) aged under 16	0	0
Part-time ELT aged 18 years and over	2	2
Part-time ELT aged 16–17 years	0	0
Part-time ELT aged under 16 years	205	205
Overall total ELT/ESOL students shown above	207	207
Junior programmes: advertised minimum age	5	5
Junior programmes: advertised maximum age	15	15
Junior programmes: predominant nationalities	Chinese, Italian, Spanish	Chinese, Italian, Spanish
Adult programmes: advertised minimum age	18+	18+
Adult programmes: typical age range	35–45	35–45
Adult programmes: typical length of stay	1 week	1 week
Adult programmes: predominant nationalities	Chinese	Chinese

Staff profile	At inspection	In peak week
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	12	12
Number teaching ELT 20 hours and over a week	0	
Number teaching ELT under 20 hours a week	12	

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Number of academic managers for eligible ELT courses	1	1
Number of management (non-academic) and administrative staff working on eligible ELT courses	4	
Total number of support staff	8	

Academic manager qualifications profile

Profile at inspection	
Professional qualifications	Number of academic managers
	manayers
TEFLQ qualification	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	0
TEFLI qualification	10
Holding specialist qualifications only (specify)	0
Qualified teacher status only (QTS)	2
Teachers without appropriate ELT/TESOL qualification	0
Total	12
Comments	
None.	

Accommodation profile

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	N/a	N/a
Private home	N/a	N/a
Home tuition	N/a	N/a
Residential	N/a	N/a
Hotel/guesthouse	N/a	N/a
Independent self-catering e.g. flats, bedsits, student houses	N/a	N/a
Arranged by student/family/guardian		
Staying with own family	N/a	N/a
Staying in privately rented rooms/flats	2	N/a
Overall totals adults/under 18s	2	0
Overall total adults + under 18s	2	