

ACCREDITATION VISIT

MAIN FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Name of Provider: Surrey Language Centre

Date of visit: 28 July 2009 and 11 August 2009

Number of students enrolled on date of visit: 28 July 2009 – 36 and 11 August 2009 - 11

The provision in context

The Surrey Language Centre (SLC, the centre) has been established for approximately 25 years. SLC provides English language tuition to international students requiring visas for study in the United Kingdom (UK) and also to students from countries within European Economic Area (EEA). The former primarily study during the academic year following general English courses, courses preparing for International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests or specifically-designed individual programmes. Most are over 18 years old. During the summer period the centre runs a general English summer school catering largely for those from the EEA, many of whom are under 19. Over the last year the maximum number of students in learning at any one time was approximately 100. Students from outside the EEA generally come as part of a group or are sponsored and financed by their employers. Only a very small number register independently. All the tuition takes place at the providers' premises, or in rented premises close by.

Courses are generally between 15 and 21 hours a week over five weekdays, meeting or exceeding the minimum number of contact hours specified by UKBA to qualify for a UK student visa. Opportunities for part-time study also exist.

One full-time tutor acts as director of studies, overseeing the academic aspects of the programmes. SLC employs other tutors in a freelance capacity in response to demand. Over the last year SLC has employed 15 tutors.

SLC is privately owned by three family members who manage and administer its operations. It shares premises with a translation bureau under the same ownership.

Overall judgement

Provision meets the standards required for accreditation and is recommended for approval by the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) for a Sponsors' Licence in accordance with UKBA guidance and the Tier 4 points-based system. Continued approval is subject to addressing areas for improvement identified within nine months of the date of this letter unless otherwise stated.

Feedback

This feedback contains the findings from the accreditation visit brought together under the three main aspects of the *Common Inspection Framework*. The findings focus on the

requirements of the student entry points-based system operated by UKBA for private education providers and the five key questions of the *Common Inspection Framework*.

Achievement and standards

Students on general English courses take and pass an appropriate range of spoken English examinations which reflect the levels of proficiency they have reached. Those on IELTS courses frequently improve their points score.

Students generally demonstrate appropriate standards in their English language listening speaking reading and writing skills. Most make reasonable progress in relation to their starting points.

Students attend regularly and punctually. All students including younger learners behave well in classes.

Quality of provision (education and training)

Standards of teaching are mixed, but satisfactory overall. The better teaching sessions strongly emphasise the development of students' speaking skills. Relationships between tutors and learners are positive and productive.

In the teaching as a whole, tutors demonstrate a good understanding of grammar. Sessions preparing students for forthcoming examinations include suitable advice on examination content and techniques. Tutors plan individual learning sessions appropriately around the needs of their student.

In weaker sessions too few students contribute orally. Tutors do not always construct and direct their questions to involve all students or check or consolidate new learning. The range of methods to promote learning is too limited, and does not cater fully for the range of different needs in each class.

The centre's premises are suitable for the training provided. The centre is housed in an attractive historic listed building in the centre of Farnham. Classrooms are pleasantly decorated, adequately sized. Furnishings and equipment are appropriate. Additional rented classrooms are at least satisfactory. Classroom resources include an appropriate range of audio visual and paper based materials. Students have the use of five networked computers with internet access. Tutors have access to an appropriate range of teaching resources. Students join the public library nearby and are encouraged to make use of its facilities. Tutors generally hold an appropriate English language teaching qualification. The director of studies additionally holds a post-graduate teaching qualification and a Master of Arts degree.

The centre offers a suitable range of provision for groups and individuals wishing to improve their English. It also offers a good range of additional sporting, recreational and cultural activities outside class hours especially during its summer programme.

Initial assessment processes are sound. Students receive appropriate pastoral and academic support from tutors. Additional advice and guidance is provided by one of the centre's owner-managers who also effectively arranges student home stay accommodation.

Leadership and management

The centre is led and managed effectively. It is a well-established business, with a clear direction for the future. Publicity materials accurately reflect the programmes on offer and resources currently available for teaching and learning.

Adequate processes are in place to monitor attendance and punctuality, but aspects are not sufficiently formalised. Review of individual students' progress and attendance is regular and routinely reported on to companies sponsoring individuals and to the client sending the majority of non-EEA students. Policies on attendance and punctuality are appropriate, but not communicated in writing clearly enough to students. Although the centre's attendance records are accurate and reliable it does not routinely collate and monitor them as a whole. Measures to inform UKBA of student non-arrival or failing attendance are satisfactory, and very rarely need to be invoked.

Processes for the assuring and improving the quality of learning and teaching are not sufficiently developed. Quality assessment relies too narrowly on students' evaluation. The centre does not systematically monitor the quality of teaching and learning through classroom observation and use its findings as a basis for improvement. Arrangements for sharing of good practice in teaching and learning are too limited.

The centre has appropriate arrangements in place to cover the general health and safety of students, but does not fully ensure they are familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of fire or other hazard. While the centre recognises problems in access to all parts of its own building for people with mobility difficulties, suitable classroom accommodation is available in other premises it rents. Adequate policies and procedures covering equality and diversity are in place for staff, but not specifically extended or communicated to students. The centre has recognised the need to improve its arrangement for safeguarding. It has initiated Criminal Records Bureau vetting checks for all teaching and other staff working in its premises. It has also indicated to new home stay hosts that similar checks may be required