



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT (Short Course Provider)

ORGANISATION: Varsity International (VI)

ADDRESS: Compass House
Farmoor Court
Farmoor
Oxford
OX2 9LU

HEAD OF ORGANISATION: Ben Prior

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of visit: 6 July 2016

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: 9 September 2016

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the organisation

Varsity International (VI) is the trading name of Varsity Language Schools Limited, a limited company incorporated in 2012. Varsity Language Schools Limited is one of three companies, which form the Active Education Group Limited (the Group). The Chief Executive of Varsity International, also Chief Executive of the Group, established all the constituent companies and is the sole company director of Varsity Language Schools Ltd.

The administrative offices for the whole Group are at Compass House, Farmoor, on the outskirts of Oxford, where they are the sole occupants of the two-storey modern building on a commercial business site. The courses are delivered in premises and facilities hired from independent schools.

The Chief Executive was head of sport at a preparatory school and has experience of operating sports and activity-based vacation programmes for non-residential children using hired premises. He established and built up another summer activities programme company, which he subsequently sold.

Varsity International, offered courses for the first time in 2015. After a period of research, since its incorporation, it now aims to complement and work with the existing day camps for UK-based students, operated by other companies within the Group. It does this by offering residential courses for students from outside the UK and the provision of English language courses or components.

While the Chief Executive oversees Varsity International, he has given increasing responsibilities to the Operations Director, who took up his full-time post in February 2015

2. Brief description of the current provision

In its first year, Varsity International offers residential summer courses for international students aged 10-16 at the premises of LVS Oxford, Begbroke, on the outskirts of Oxford. A home-stay option is also being offered. The course period runs for five weeks, from early July to late August, and students choose their length of stay.

Students come primarily from Europe, but some are from Russia, China, and the Middle Eastern countries, as well as from the UK. The programme includes 15 hours of English language classes weekly and an extensive activities programme, in which non-residential UK-based students, enrolled on activities camps at the same location, take part.

VI offers residential courses for international students, comprising a core component of English language teaching accompanied by sporting and other activities. A home-stay option is also available. It also offers activity courses for non-residential UK-based students on the same site marketed under the name Varsity Summer Camps, with optional English language components available. In addition, optional English components are also offered on the other activities day camps of the Group marketed under different brands, and at other locations.

Overlapping activities programmes bring together international students with English-native-speaking students to mutual benefit.

VI provides an optional English language tuition component for non-residential day camps for younger students, aged from four to 14, operated by sister companies at other independent school locations in southern England. The English component is for one or two hours daily.

3. Inspection visit process

The inspection was carried out by one Inspector over one half-day at the Active Education Group Limited office. Meetings were held with the Group and Varsity International CEO, Group Operations Director, VI Operations Manager and VI Director of Studies. A private room was made available for the meetings, and all documentation was readily available. One item was sent the following day by email. This inspection report is in relation to the provider's provision in the United Kingdom only.

4. Inspection history

Full SCP Inspection: 21 - 22 July 2015

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the provider

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

None.

2. Response to actions points in last report

11.1 Procedures and arrangements for academic quality assurance must be strengthened.

Each tutor is now provided with their own specific course outline. They develop detailed day by day course activities within their outline. These are all reviewed, before the course starts, as part of the newly established tutor training programme for 2016.

A new policy, with comprehensive structure, system and training, is now in place to monitor student progress, and this will be used for the first time during summer 2016.

All students are tested on arrival for their English language skills via an on-line test and a one-to-one interview. Students' English language progress is monitored by, and includes significant one-to-one contact with tutors. Students' attendance and academic progress records are held electronically, with appropriate security and restricted access, and this data is routinely archived.

Quality assurance is driven from all five of the relevant stakeholder groups by feedback, and which is reviewed by the Senior Management Team.

Response to recommendations in last report

Introduce more formalised procedures for recording absence, if the scale of courses increases.

This has been done, and will be implemented for 2016 courses. Tutors will record absences at three points each day. This data is collected by the Operations Manager so that the necessary follow-up and checking can be completed promptly.

Strengthen language learning opportunities during activities with native speakers by appropriate preparation during classroom teaching.

The English language tuition programme has been strengthened and its structure improved for 2016 courses.

Strengthen quality assurance in relation to teaching, for instance by undertaking teaching observation at an early stage, particularly of inexperienced teachers.

All tutors will be observed twice during the summer course period.

Strengthen the profile of language teachers in terms of qualifications and experience;

All tutor appointments, including those for the practical activities, will additionally depend on the tutor's academic qualifications to tutor English language skills.

Build up more extensive teaching and learning resources, particularly those focusing on oral and listening skills.

IT tablets are available for students to borrow to participate in the course.

Strengthening lesson preparation by design and use of a fuller lesson plan format

Previous course programmes have been changed from a text book emphasis to an IT emphasis, with considerable inclusion of audio-visual learning materials.

Holding more extensive meetings with teachers before the start of the course.

This has been arranged.

Consider how progress in language skills can be more effectively monitored during courses;

Student assessment will be continuous during their course, so that more appropriate learning and support can be made available to them.

Revise the safeguarding arrangements in the Staff Handbook specifically to consider how any concerns are raised and dealt with by the Operations Director.

This has been done.

3. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

3.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
The Group and the newly established VI currently have no advisory Governing Body. Strategic decisions currently are taken by the three members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).				
The Group's office premises lease expires in December 2017. It is expected that this will be renewed, although additional office space at an alternative venue may be required by then.				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
None.				

3.3 Participant Welfare (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for all activities including visits away from Oxford.				
Two of the Senior Management Team are first aid trained, together with two other Group administrators. First aid training is carried out in-house by a qualified first aider.				
The Group holds a list of local speakers/translators of the various students' home languages for emergencies.				

3.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
None				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution's strengths

The Chief Executive and the Group Operations Director bring considerable experience of activities-based summer programmes, and a clear commitment to quality and improvement. Two recent appointments, VI Operations Manager and VI Director of Studies, have introduced significant developments in the initial assessment, monitoring, and progress of both tutors and students via new policies, structures, systems, and training. All these changes are being implemented for the 2016 programme of courses.

VI shares and has ready access to the considerable resources of support and experience of the whole Group.

Pre-arrival information and procedures are strong and well thought through.

The activities programme is rich, extensive and varied.

VI has secured summer course premises of very high quality, ideally suited to the purpose.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
None	

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable Public liability insurance, Data Protection registration, and Copyright certificate documentation were all in order with renewal dates during 2017.	