

Working out the rankings

Read on to see what we use to calculate the top UK language centres.

Our rankings are based on the inspection results given in 15 areas, for centres which take under 18s, or 14 areas for those that don't. The names of all 15 areas are listed vertically at the top of the rankings table.

Each area is marked under a set number of criteria ranging in number between four and eight. Each criterion is given one of three judgements: 'not met', 'met', or 'strong'.

- An 'area of strength' is given where at least 50% of the criteria are marked 'strong' and no single criterion is marked 'not met'.
- A 'need for improvement' is given where 50% of criteria is marked 'not met'.

In the column under each area, scores are marked in a box:

1 = a strength in that area.

-1 = a need for Improvement.

Where the box is empty, the centre met the requirements.

The scores are normally based on the 'summary statements' that list of areas of strength and needs for improvement for every school. These are usually published monthly, but where these are missing, we rely on full reports.

Our algorithm makes adjustments for the fact that the British Council will accredit centres with negative scores, and also—due to a change this year on the criteria for 'Academic staff profile'—an adjustment to correct any disadvantage posed to who were inspected under the

old system, and those in the state sector (see page 16 for more details).

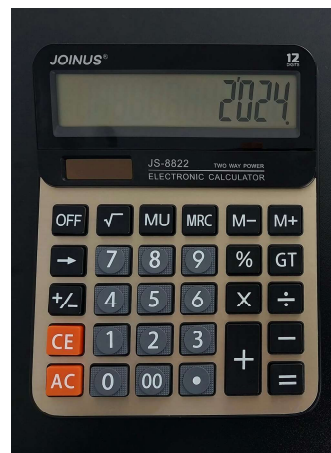
Centres which have a strength in both staff profile and teaching are marked with a †—you will see that every centre in the top 5% of the rankings table has this mark.

The scores are calculated in percentages of the perfect score, but published as marks out of 10. The top seven centres have all scored 100%, shown in the table as a 10.00. In other words, a centre scoring 9.50 on our table has 95% of all available points.

You will notice that some centres have scores like 6.32 or 7.89; this is primarily caused by a difference in number of areas inspected and/or the weighting for teacher qualify plus teaching quality.

This year, all centres are in the same percentile ranking, for example, the top 8%, even though there might be a 0.7 point difference in the mark between the top centre in that per centile and the bottom.

So, with all the technical stuff out of the way, it's time to take a closer look at the rankings tables, starting on the opposite page!





**The English
Language Centre**
BRIGHTON / CHESTER / EASTBOURNE

#1 GROUP

OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
SCHOOLS IN THE UK*

CHESTER



BRIGHTON



EASTBOURNE



3 GREAT SCHOOLS IN 3 ICONIC LOCATIONS

ELC Chester and ELC Brighton joint #1 schools

*based on EL Gazette rankings

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Centre of Excellence
2024 - 2025

Percentile	Score	Institution	Type	Strategic and quality management	Staff management	Student administration	Publicity	Premises and facilities	Learning resources	Academic staff profile	Academic management	Course design	Learner management	Teaching	Care of students	Accommodation	Leisure opportunities	safeguarding under 18s
PERFECT SCORES	10.00	†ELC Bristol*	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.00	†English Language Centre, Chester, The	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.00	†English Language Centre, Brighton, The	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.00	†LSI, Portsmouth*	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.00	†London School of English, The	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.00	†Summer Boarding Courses, Shipley*	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.00	†Wimbledon School of English*	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOP 3%	9.50	†Bell International Cambridge*	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	9.50	†Bell Young Learners- Multicentre	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	9.50	†Broadstairs English Centre	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOP 5%	9.00	†International House London	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.95	†University of Manchester	Uni	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.95	†University of Sheffield	Uni	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOP 8%	8.50	Bishopstrow College, Warminster*	PLS:Y BS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	Chichester College	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	East Sussex College, Lewes and Eastbourne	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†International House Bristol*	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†INTO Manchester	Pathway	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	ISCA School of English*	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†King's Foundation, King's College London	Uni	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†Loxdale English Centre	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†NILE Norwich	TT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†Peartree ELEA, NEW	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†St. Giles International, Brighton	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.50	†St. Giles International, Central London	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.42	†Plymouth Marjon University, NEW	Uni	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

KEY

1 = strength
 -1 = need for improvement
 NA = not applicable
 Blank = met the standard
 † = high quality teaching
 * = compliance report

Biz

BS

FE

TT

PLS:A

PLS:Y+A

PLS:Y BS

PLS:Y SS

Uni

PWay

Business and professional training centre

Boarding school

Further education college

Teacher training specialist

Private language school primarily accepting adults 16+

Private language school catering for both adults and young learners

Private language boarding school primarily catering for young learners under 16

Private language summer school primarily catering for young learners under 16

University

Pathway

The information in this table is based on the latest Summary Statements for each centre as of 13 September 2024 and any compliance report where applicable. The Summary Statement can be found on page 1 of the full report for every accredited centre. These can be found at britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/centres.

UK RANKINGS 2024-2025

Percentile	Score	Institution	Type	Strategic and quality management	Staff management	Student administration	Publicity	Premises and facilities	Learning resources	Academic staff profile	Academic management	Course design	Learner management	Teaching	Care of students	Accommodation	Leisure opportunities	safeguarding under 18s
TOP 10%	8.00	†BEET Language Centre	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	
	8.00	Discovery Summer, London	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1			1	1	1
	8.00	EF International Bournemouth	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1
	8.00	EF International Oxford	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1
	8.00	English Language Centre, Eastbourne, The	PLS:A	1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1
	8.00	International House Torquay	PLS:A	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1
	8.00	INTO Queen's University Belfast	Pathway	1	1	1		1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.00	Kaplan International Bournemouth	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	8.00	†Kings Oxford	PLS:A	1	1	1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1
	8.00	St. Clare's, Oxford	PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1
	8.00	†University of Salford	Uni	1				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	7.89	†Sheffield Hallam University*	Uni		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
TOP 15%	7.50	†Belfast Metropolitan College*	FE	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1			
	7.50	Bell Young Learners, St. Albans, NEW	PLS:Y	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1			1		1	1
	7.50	†Brunel University, London*	Uni	1		1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1	
	7.50	Exsportise	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1		1			1	1		1	1	1	1	1
	7.50	Harrow School Short Courses	PLS:Y BS	1	1	1	1	1	1			1			1	1	1	1
	7.50	Heathfield Summer School	PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1		1	1	1			1	1	1	1
	7.50	†Hilderstone College*	FE	1		1			1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	
	7.50	Kaplan International Manchester	PLS:A	1	1	1			1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1
	7.50	Kensington Academy of English, NEW	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1
	7.50	Kings Brighton	PLS:A	1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
	7.50	†South and City College, Birmingham	FE	1	1			1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	
	7.50	Stafford House School of English, Canterbury	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1			1	
	7.50	Stafford House School of English, London	PLS:A	1	1	1		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	7.50	†Perth College*	FE	1	1	1	-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
	7.50	†University of Birmingham	Uni	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
	7.50	†University of Nottingham	Uni	1				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
	7.37	Teesside University	Uni	1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	
	7.37	†University of Chichester	Uni	1					1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
	7.37	University of Dundee*	Uni		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	
	7.37	University of Leicester	Uni		1	1			1		1	1		1	1	1	1	
TOP 20%	7.00	Bede's Summer School, Hailsham	PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1		1	1				1	1	1	1
	7.00	†Cardiff and Vale College*	FE	1	1				1	1		1	1	1	1		1	
	7.00	EC Manchester	PLS:A	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		
	7.00	ECS*	PLS:Y SS	1		1		1	1		1		1	1	1	1		1
	7.00	EF International, Brighton*	PLS:A	1	1	1	-1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1
	7.00	EF International, Manchester*	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	
	7.00	Kaplan International, Oxford	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	

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TOP 20% cont.	7.00	Kings Summer Camps	PLS:Y BS	1		1	1	1	1			1			1	1	1	1
	7.00	Language in Action, Multicentre	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1		1	1			1			1	1	1	1
	7.00	NCG, Liverpool	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	
	7.00	New College, Durham	FE	1		1		1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	
	7.00	Sherborne International*	PLS:Y BS	1		1		1	1			1	1		1	1	1	1
	7.00	Sidmouth International School*	PLS:Y+A	1	1		1	1			1	1			1	1	1	1
	7.00	Studio Cambridge	PLS:A	1	1				1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1
	6.84	De Montfort University*	Uni	1		1		1	1			1		1	1	1	1	
	6.84	ECS Scotland*	PLS:A	1	1		1	1	1					1	1	1	1	
	6.84	Kent School of English, NEW	PLSY+A	1		1			1		1	1		1		1	1	1
	6.84	Nottingham Trent University*	Uni	1				1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	
TOP 25%	6.50	Bucksmore Education*	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1				1	
	6.50	Celtic English Academy	PLS:A	1	1	1	1				1		1		1	1	1	
	6.50	Churchill House School of English Language	PLS:Y+A	1		1			1	1	1	1	1			1	1	
	6.50	EF International, Eastbourne*	PLS:A	1	1	1	-1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1	
	6.50	IH London Young Learner Centres	PLS:Y	1	1	1		1	1			1			1		1	1
	6.50	Itchen Sixth Form College*	FE	1	1	1		1				1	1		1	1	1	
	6.50	Manor Courses*	PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	-1	1			1	1			1	1	1	1
	6.50	Millfield English Language Holiday Courses	PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1	1						1	1	1	1
	6.50	NCG, Manchester	PLS:A	1	1	1		1					1	1	1		1	1
	6.50	Severnvale Academy, NEW	PLS:A	1	1	1		1		1					1	1		1
	6.50	Sheffield College*	FE		1			1	1			1	1	1	1	1		1
	6.50	St. Brelade's College*	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1					1	1	
	6.50	English Experience (UK) Ltd., The	PLS:Y		1	1			1		1	1	1	1			1	1
	6.50	†University of Bradford	Uni	1				1	1	1	1	1		1	1			
	6.32	University of Greenwich	Uni		1			1	1			1	1	1	1		1	

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But what does it all mean?

We take a closer look at what has changed and what it means for the Gazette Centres of Excellence.

The most noticeable change about the 2024 rankings is how much shorter the list is this year.

Since the end of COVID lockdowns, despite the disappearance of 25% of accredited centres—and up to 30% for private language schools—the rankings pages ran to at least three and half pages.

This year it fits neatly on to three.

There are still around 370 language centres on the British Council lists, counting all the different accredited operations some schools run, not far off from the total we logged last year. But the Centre of Excellence (CoE) numbers have gone down by about 20%.

Why? There are three main reasons:

The first is that, since 2021 to the end of last year, centres were able to opt for a compliance inspection. No new strengths were given and the provider was allowed to carry on citing the areas of strength that were awarded at its last inspection.

Needs Improvement in an area could be given and these were deducted from the score for the purposes of our ranking. A score could go down, but it could not go up.

By opting in to a Compliance Inspection most CoEs could be sure of remaining in our ranking unless they scored too many Needs for Improvement,

By last year it became clear that centres who opted for Full Reports often saw sharp falls in Areas of Strength awarded, while those on Compliance Reports rarely dropped more than two or three points.

An analysis of the figures showed that the weaknesses tended to be associated with management; in particular, academic management. The premises were still nice and accommodation remained okay, but scores for Teaching and Learning were all over the place.

This should perhaps be no surprise. Virtually every Director of Studies (DOS) in the UK, along with all the teachers, was made redundant during the pandemic. Having found their management skills were much sought after in other sectors where they were assured of permanent contracts and better money, very few of them came back.

It takes an experienced DOS with an eye for detail and a thorough knowledge of the accreditation scheme to achieve CoE status, especially when most teachers were new and inexperienced.

The lack of an experienced DOS may be the reason that the number of Needs for Improvement in Teaching and Learning have



increased. Course design, for example, was one of the most common areas of strength in normal times. Now, 12 private language schools have been told they need to improve in that area this year.

Bizarrely, one compliance report for chain schools is reported as having an Area of Strength on the summary statement (issued in a prior inspection) but a Need for Improvement in the area was noted during the compliance inspection.

Not one FE College, University or Pathway programme is reported to have any such need for improvement. After all, all their teachers are graduates, most are qualified to Diploma level, and they are all likely to earn more as teachers than they could get as a language school DOS.

In London, teachers on pathway programmes are on annual salaries of £35,000 to £40,000. Meanwhile, a DOS position in the North of England is on offer at £26,000. In the same city, £26,000 is the starting rate currently on offer for an accounts clerk.

A particular problem with low salary for DOSs is that while there are plenty of expat Brits with the right qualifications and experience wanting to come home, those with a non-British spouse needs a minimum annual salary of £29,000 to get the required visa.

The number of accredited centres has held pretty steady over the last couple of years because new schools have replaced the olds. However, it is largely universities, FE colleges and boarding schools which have left the scheme. These are more likely to score in the top 25% on inspection than the small private language schools, with two or three classrooms and a handful of students which have replaced them.

New centres very rarely hit the *Gazette* rankings; a handful of state sector operation and boarding schools have done so. Small wonder, then, that two of our new entrants were CoEs for many years before dropping down a little. So, welcome back to Severnvale Academy and Plymouth Marjon University.

And most of the other new CoEs are hardly Johnny-come-latelys. Bell St Albans has been around for several years, Bell itself for 90. Kent School of English, best known for its year-round closed courses for school children, was founded in 1972. Kensington Academy, long one of the best value schools in London, dates back to 1976.

The British have long believed that, as with houses and furniture, the older a school is, the better. With private language schools, it certainly seems to hold true in UK EFL.