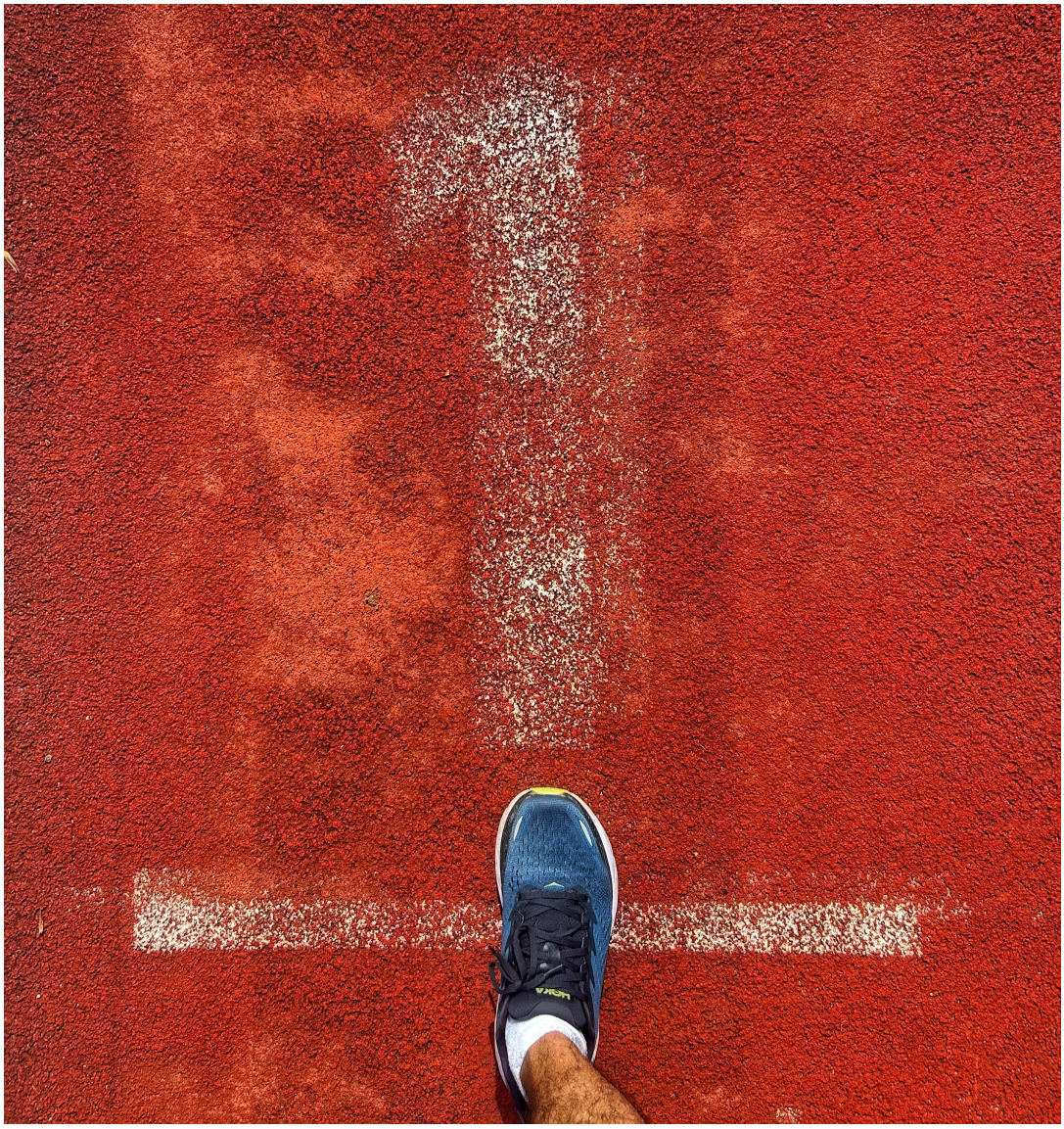
The UK language centre rankings 2026-2027

UK Centres of Excellence



el·gazette

Centre of Excellence

2026 – 2027

An exclusive look

Read on to find out how we calculated our school rankings and get a sneak peek at this year's biggest headlines.



The wait is over! *EL Gazette*'s 2026-2027 school rankings are here.

Every year, the British Council produces inspection reports that look at 15 areas. Our table is based on all reports in 2026 up until the 28th of July. You can find the areas of inspection at the top of the *EL Gazette* rankings table. There are three possible outcomes for each category:

- It is an area of strength (marked '1')
- It has a need for improvement (marked '-1')
- It meets the standard (marked with a blank space).

In 2024, *EL Gazette* introduced a new algorithm in response to the British Council's adjustments to Academic Staff Profiles. Our table favours institutions that excel in both teacher quality and observed teaching. Centres that are strong in both areas receive a small increase in their score, marked with a '†' in our rankings.

Last year's table used the latest report data and was adjusted for any subsequent compliance or spot checks, presenting final marks out of 10. Following its success, this year's table will use the same formula.

How we calculate the rankings

When reviewing each institution, we use the information found in the most recent full report together with any subsequent compliance or spot check reports. Our process can be neatly divided into 7 steps:

1. Count the areas of strength recorded in the centre's most recent full inspection report.
2. Deduct the areas identified as needing improvement from the full report.
3. Add back any areas previously identified as needing improvement from the full report that have been confirmed as corrected in a compliance report.
4. Deduct any new areas needing improvement identified in a compliance or spot check inspection.
5. Add four points to the result in order to reflect the full range of scores accepted for accreditation, which runs from 0 to 3.
6. Divide the score by the number of areas inspected, which is usually 15.
7. Convert the result to a score out of 10 to be shown on the rankings table.

For institutions that teach students under the age of 18, our

rankings use the information across all 15 areas. For schools that do not, we calculate the score using 14 areas. The result for each area is shown in the relevant box:

- '1' indicates an area of strength.
- '–1' indicates a need for improvement.
- An empty box indicates that the centre met the relevant requirements.

The scores are typically taken from the inspection report's summary statements. When these are not available, we use the findings in the full inspection report.



Our findings

Now you know how it all works, let's take a look at this year's headlines!

EL Gazette's 2026 rankings table includes 96 institutions, ranging from summer schools to further education to private schools and universities, matching the same number in the 2025 table. The two tables reveal a high degree of stability among the entered schools, with just 13 institutions leaving and 13 new names taking their place.

A special welcome back goes to ELC Brighton, ELC Bristol, ELC Chester, The London School of English, Summer Boarding Courses and Wimbledon School of English, all of which continue to top the chart and have retained their '†' mark from last year.

This year's table reports greater diversification of ELT in the UK, particularly in relation to geography and student age. With a few words of wisdom from IALC President **Jane Dancaster**, we explore what this could mean for the future of ELT.

So, without further ado, let's get started!

Arrivals

LSI/IH Portsmouth
Peartree ELEA Cardiff
Bayswater Liverpool
Churchill House School of English Language
English Path London
International Student Club
ELAC Study Vacations
Speak Up London
Stafford House School of English Cambridge
Ardmore Language School
Bath College
Sherborne International
Central Language School (Cambridge)

Departures

Language Studies International
Bell International Cambridge
Kaplan International Bournemouth
Sheffield Hallam University
Bell Young Learners St Albans
Kaplan International Manchester
Cardiff and Vale College
EF International Brighton
ECS Scotland
Nottingham Trent University
Celtic English Academy
Millfield English Language Holiday Courses
University of Bradford

Score	Institution	Region	Summer age	Yr round min age	Inspected & compliance date NOT LAST SC	Chain	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
10.0	ELC Brighton†	SE	16+	16+	6-24		PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10.0	ELC Bristol†	SW	16+	16+	3-23		PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10.0	ELC Chester†	N	14+	16+	6-24		PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10.0	London School of English (The)†	LDN	18+	18+	7-24		PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10.0	Summer Boarding Courses†	N	8+	NA	7-23		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10.0	Wimbledon School of English†	LDN	16+	16+	3-23		PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9.5	Broadstairs English Centre†	SE	12+	9+	11-24		PLS:Y+A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9.5	Brooke House College†	MID	11+	No	7-24		PLS:Y BS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
9.5	Harrow School Short Courses†	LDN	13+	No	7-24		PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9.5	New College Durham†	N	16+	16+	5-25		FE	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9.5	NILE Norwich†	E	18+	18+	8-24		TT	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9.5	LSI/IH Portsmouth	SW	18+	18+	5-26		PLS:A	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
9.0	Brunel University, London†	LDN	No	17+	3-26		Uni	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
9.0	International House London†	LDN	16+	16+	9-22	Y	PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
9.0	International House Torquay	SW	10+	16+	6-24	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
8.9	University of Manchester†	N	18+	18+	2-23		Uni	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
8.9	University of Sheffield†	N	17+	17+	11-24		Uni	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
8.5	Chichester College	SE	16+	16+	4-23		FE	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
8.5	East Sussex College Lewes	SE	16+	16+	5-23		FE	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
8.5	International House Bristol†	SW	12+	16+	2-22	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1			1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
8.5	International House London Young Learners†	MLT	8+	No	7-24	Y	PLS:Y	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	
8.5	INTO Manchester†	N	16+	16+	11-22		pathway	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
8.5	ISCA School of English	SW	12+	No	6-22		PLS:Y SS		1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8.5	King's Foundation, King's College London†	LDN	17+	17+	3-22	Y	Uni	1				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
8.5	Living Learning English†	SW	10+	10+	4-25		LTH		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1
8.5	Loxdale English Centre†	SE	8+	8+	1-25		PLS:Y+A	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		1	1
8.5	NCG Liverpool†	N	16+	16+	10-25		PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	
8.5	NCG Manchester†	N	16+	16+	9-25		PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1
8.5	Peartree ELEA Cardiff†	WLS	12+	NA	7-24		PLS : Y	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1
8.5	Peartree Languages†	WLS	12+	16+	7-24		PLS:Y+A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1
8.5	St. Giles International Central London†	LDN	16+	16+	4-22	Y	PLS:A	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
8.5	Stafford House School of English, Canterbury	E	11+	16+	10-25	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1
8.5	Stafford House School of English, London	LDN	14+	14+	10-25	Y	PLS:Y+A		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1
8.5	University of Nottingham†	MID	17+	17+	2-25		Uni	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	
8.4	De Montfort University	MID	No	18+	8-25		Uni	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		
8.4	Plymouth Marjon University†	SW	18+	18+	11-25		Uni	1				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
8.4	University of Dundee†	SCO	NA	18+	10-24		Uni	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		

Score	Institution	Region	Summer age	Yr round min age	Inspected & compliance date NOT LAST SC	Chain	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
8.0	BEET Language Centre†	SW	16+	16+	5-22		PLS:A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1			1	
8.0	Discovery Summer	LDN	8+	No	8-23		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1			1	1	1
8.0	EF International Bournemouth	SW	13+	16+	3-24	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1
8.0	EF International Oxford	MID	16+	16+	9-24	Y	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1
8.0	ELC Eastbourne	SE	16+	16+	5-24		PLS:A	1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1
8.0	Exsportise	SE	8+	No	8-24		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1	1	1	1
8.0	INTO Queen's University Belfast	NI	16+	16+	10-23		pathway	1	1	1		1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8.0	Kings Oxford†	MID	16+	16+	10-25	Y	PLS:A	1	1	1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
8.0	St. Clare's, Oxford	MID	10+	15+	7-23		PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1
8.0	University of Salford	N	17+	17+	11-24		Uni	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	
7.5	Bayswater Liverpool	N	16+	16+	2-26	Y	PLS: A	1	1	1		1	1		1			1	1	1	1	1
7.5	Belfast Metropolitan College†	NI	16+	No	5-23		FE	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1			
7.5	Churchill House School of English Language	SE	11+	11+	10-25		PLS:Y	1	1	1		1	1		1	1			1	1	1	1
7.5	English Path London†	LDN	13+	16+	9-25	Y	PLS:Y+A	1		1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1	
7.5	Heathfield Summer School	MID	9+	No	8-22		PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1		1	1	1			1	1	1	1
7.5	Hilderstone College†	SE	16+	16+	10-22		FE	1		1			1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	
7.5	International Student Club	MID	8+	8+	7-26		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1		1			1	1	1		1	1	1	
7.5	Kensington Academy, David Game College	LDN	16+	16+	10-23		PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1
7.5	Kings Brighton	SE	16+	16+	5-23	Y	PLS:A	1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
7.5	South and City College Birmingham†	MID	NA	18+	4-24		FE	1	1			1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	
7.5	UHI Perth†	SCO	16+	16+	4-23		FE	1	1	1	-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
7.4	Teesside University	N	18+	18+	8-23		Uni	1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	
7.4	University of Chichester†	SE	NA	18+	11-23		Uni	1					1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
7.4	University of Leicester	MID	18+	18+	11-23		Uni		1	1			1		1	1		1	1	1	1	
7.0	Bede's Summer School	SE	6+	No	8-22		PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1		1	1				1	1	1	1
7.0	EC Manchester	N	16+	16+	10-22	Y	PLS:A	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		
7.0	ECS	SW	16+	No	8-23		PLS:Y SS	1		1		1	1		1		1	1	1	1		1
7.0	EF Language School, Manchester	N	16+	16+	11-23	Y	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	
7.0	ELAC Study Vacations	SW	9+	No	7-25		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1		1	1		1				1	1	1	1
7.0	Kings London	LDN	14+	14+	6-23	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1				1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1
7.0	Kings Summer Camps	SW	10+	No	7-19	Y	PLS:Y BS	1		1	1	1	1			1			1	1	1	1
7.0	KKCL	LDN	10+	4+	8-24		PLS:Y+A	1	1	1		1	1		1	1			1		1	1
7.0	Language in Action, Multicentre	SE	12+	No	7-22		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1		1	1			1			1	1	1	1
7.0	Oxford School of English†	MID	16+	16+	7-24		PLS:A					1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1
7.0	Sidmouth International School	SW	8+	8+	6-22		PLS:Y+A	1	1		1	1			1	1			1	1	1	1
7.0	SKOLA English in London	LDN	6+	6+	7-24		PLS:Y	1	1	1			1			1	1		1	1	1	1

UK RANKINGS 2026-2027·

Score	Institution	Region	Summer age	Yr round min age	Inspected & compliance date NOT LAST SC	Chain	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
7.0	Speak Up London	LDN	8+	8+	5-26		PLS:Y+A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1		1		1	
7.0	Stafford House School of English Cambridge	E	12+	16+	10-25	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1				1	1
6.8	Kent School of English	SE	12+	12+	10-22		PLS:Y+A	1		1			1		1	1		1		1	1	1
6.5	Ardmore Language School	MID	8+	No	8-22		PLS:Y	1	1	1			1	1	1	1			1		1	
6.5	Bath College	SW	16+	16+	3-26		FE	1	1	1				1	1	1	1		1			1
6.5	Bucksmore Education	LDN	10+	No	7-22		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1				1	
6.5	Churchill House Summer Centres	SE	8+	No	7-23		PLS:Y SS	1	1	1		1			1				1	1	1	1
6.5	EF International Bristol	SW	12+	16+	4-22	Y	PLS:Y+A		1	1	-1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1	
6.5	EF International Eastbourne	SE	13+	16+	4-23	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1	1	-1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1	
6.5	International House Newcastle†	N	13+	16+	6-23	Y	PLS:Y+A	1	1			1		1	1			1	1		1	
6.5	Kaplan International Oxford	MID	16+	16+	6-25	Y	PLS:A	1	1	1		1	1		1		1		1		1	
6.5	Language training company†	SE	16+	16+	7-24		PLS: A		1			1		1	1			1	1		1	1
6.5	Languages United	SW	12+	19+	7-24		PLS:A	1	1	1					1		1	1	1		1	1
6.5	Manor Courses	SE	7+	NA	7-23		PLS:Y SS		1	1	-1	1			1	1			1	1	1	
6.5	Severnvale Academy	MID	16+	13+	4-24		PLS:A	1	1	1		1		1					1	1		1
6.5	Sheffield College	N	16+	16+	12-23		FE		1			1	1			1	1	1	1	1		1
6.5	Sherborne International	SW	7+	11+	7-24		PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1	1						1	1	1	1
6.5	St. Brelade's College	CI	10+	16+	4-23		PLS:Y+A	1	1	1		1	1	1	1					1	1	
6.5	University of Birmingham†	MID	NA	16+	5-26		Uni	1					1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
6.3	Buckswood Overseas Summer School	SE	8+	No	8-22		PLS:Y BS	1	1	1		1				1	1				1	1
6.3	Central Language School (Cambridge)	E	12+	16+	5-26		PLS:A	1	1	1				1	1		1			1	1	
6.3	Melton College	N	13+	16+	10-23		PLS:Y+A	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

BS	Boarding school
FE	Further education college
TT	Teacher training specialist
PLS:A	Private language school primarily accepting adults 16+
PLS:Y+A	Private language school catering for both adults and young learners
PLS:Y BS	Private language boarding school primarily catering for young learners under 16
PLS:Y SS	Private language summer school primarily catering for young learners under 16
Uni	University
SW	Southwest
SE	Southeast
EA	East England / East Anglia
LON	London
EM	East Midlands
WM	West Midlands
NE	North East
NW	North West
YOR	Yorkshire and the Humber
MLT	Multicentre
WLS	Wales
SCO	Scotland
NI	Northern Ireland
CHI	Channel Islands

The information in this table is based on the latest Summary Statements for each centre as of 00 September 2026 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.

What does it all mean?

EL Gazette's 2026-2027 School Rankings provide key insight into the quality of schools and the evolving landscape of ELT. Read on to learn what the data really means.

Since the last rankings table, 13 schools have left the scheme. Whilst 2025 saw the high performance and increasing presence of university language centres, 3 of this year's departures were from universities, lowering their total number to 14 from 17. Although, the overall group achieved a higher median score, given that the lower rated universities have been removed.

Amongst the fallen were Bell International Cambridge and Bell Young Learners St Albans. After over 70 years of teaching, Bell English dissolved in October 2025, citing "significant cashflow challenges". Not long after, MC Academy suddenly closed its doors in Manchester and Liverpool. This was shortly followed by the winding down of the Golders Green College group, consisting of Golders Green College, GG Colleges Oxford Street and ABC School of English. 2026 saw Live Language enter administration and the closure of International House Belfast over the summer months. In recent weeks, news of EC English Language Centres' end has shaken the profession.

Although company specific experiences are likely to factor into each closure, they provide an illustration of the pressures facing international education. In the first



four months of 2026, the Home Office received 33% less sponsored study visa applications than those received in the same period in 2025.[1] This statistic is not an outlier. Rather, it is part of a larger story of change – one we think will continue into 2027.

The 2024/2025 total number of international students in higher education was 10% below the amount in 2022/2023. The same year also saw a decrease of over 54,000 in new international entrants from 2022/2023.[2]

The current decline in international students is by no means evidence that the UK is no longer an attractive study destination. In fact, in 2024 it remained the second most popular destination for international students.[3] So, what we are seeing is a response to the current geopolitical dynamics shaping the world.

Student and Graduate visas

The Graduate Route, introduced in 2021, allowed most international graduates to remain in the UK for two years and three years for doctoral graduates. The Migration Observatory states that the Graduate Route, combined with university financial incentives, contributed to the increase in international student migration after 2019.[4]

However, from January 2027, the Graduate Route will be shortened to 18 months for graduates of both BA and MA

[1] (ICEF Monitor, 2026)
[2] (House of Commons Library, 2026)
[3] (Migration Observatory, 2026).
[4] (Migration Observatory 2026)

degrees. Alongside this, the 2024 cap on dependents has decreased the feasibility of studying in the UK for many students. Only those studying a PhD, postgraduate research course or government-sponsored course for over 6 months can bring dependents to the UK, shifting away from previous government policy. Around 143,000 student dependant visas were issued in 2023, compared with around 20,000 in 2025 which is roughly an 86% reduction.[5]

Although, it is worth noting that as of August 3, 2026, children born in the UK to a parent holding a Graduate Route visa are eligible to be a dependent.

University restrictions

Studying in the UK is not as easy as it might once have been. There are greater hurdles to students and families and tougher restrictions against university recruitment.

The compliance regime, introduced in June 2026, pressures universities to maintain a visa refusal rate of under 5%. Alongside this, the enrolment rate must be above 95% and the course completion rate must be above 85%. A red-amber-green rating system tracks this, threatening licence revocation for those that fail to meet any of the three requirements. Those in the amber zone can no longer increase their international enrolments.[6]

Inevitably, the effects are heavy on international education in the UK. Following its annual Basic Compliance Assessment in August, The Bloomsbury Institute had its student sponsor licence revoked. As BUILA found in its survey of UK universities, many are increasingly fearful over recruitment, careful to accept students who won't contribute to a compliance risk. One third of institutions admitted to taking pre-emptive measures ahead of BCA's arrival. Meanwhile, 70% reported a decrease in postgraduate enrolments whilst the average enrolment rate fell by 31% from January 2025 to January 2026.[7]



> Recent closures across our sector have been deeply upsetting, especially for the students whose studies have been disrupted, the staff who have lost jobs, and the agents left supporting anxious clients both emotionally and financially.

The warm welcome international students readily received just a few years ago is rapidly slipping away. From the 1st of August 2028, higher education

[5] (Migration Observatory 2026)
[6] (House of Commons Library, 2026)
[7] (House of Commons Library, 2026)

providers will charge a fee of £925 per international student per year. The new International Student Levy will only be applicable to institutions in England and will not apply to the first 220 students that year. Under Keir Starmer, the government reasoned that within its first year, the levy would cost the sector 14,000 international students and £270 million whilst raising £445 million for means-tested maintenance grants.[8]

Don't lose hope!

If any of you are feeling particularly glum after reviewing the data, do not fret just yet. Jane Dancaster offers food for thought.

"These events have understandably created concern across international education, but they should also prompt a serious and collective conversation about the pressures facing our industry. Changing visa and regulatory environments, rising costs, shifts in student demand and wider economic uncertainty are creating challenges for providers in many destinations.

As a sector, we need to look carefully at how schools, associations, agents, governments and other stakeholders can work together to strengthen resilience, improve transparency and ensure that students are better protected.

International language travel continues to have an enormously positive impact worldwide. We now need to learn from recent events and work together to build a stronger, more sustainable sector."

– Jane Dancaster, IALC President and Chief Executive of Wimbledon School of English.



As our rankings show, Jane Dancaster is right. This is by no means the end of ELT nor international education in the UK.

2026 accounts for 96 institutions, meaning that despite closures, there is still strength in numbers. Asides from our newbies, there are plenty of rising stars that deserve recognition.

Asides from these improvements, high levels of stability exist amongst those that also appeared in last year's table. This is especially true for the schools below, all of which retained the top score of 10 from the previous two years.

- ELC Brighton
- ELC Bristol
- ELC Chester
- Summer Boarding Courses
- Wimbledon School of English
- The London School of English

Rising stars

- Brooke House College and New College Durham particularly shone this year, both moving from a 7 in 2025 to a 9.5 and rising considerably in the ranks.
- NCG Manchester improved from a 6.5 to and 8.5 and NCG Liverpool jumped from a 7 to an 8.5.
- Brunel University achieved the impressive feat of increasing its score from 7.5 to 9, placing in the top 15 schools.
- Another university joins the list, with De Montfort University gaining an 8.4 after its score of 6.8 in 2025.
- Stafford House Canterbury and Stafford House London both scored a full point higher this year.

[8] (Department for Education, 2025)

NILE Norwich, one of last year's rising stars, maintained its high score of 9.5, a full point jump from its 2023-2024 score. Broadstairs English Centre and Harrow School Short Courses also maintained its 9.5 score. The University of Manchester and the University of Sheffield remain steady, repeating their 8.9 scores this year.

The long-term security at the peak of our rankings showcases the excellent quality of our high performers and their ability to consistently meet targets across every sector. Despite the stability at the top, the subsequent shifting across the table is to be expected, revealing the evolving nature of the profession.

The diversification of the rankings

This year's strongest performers show us something important. Traditional language schools are not the only valuable institution in the market.

Whilst private language schools still dominate the top positions, our rising stars add another dimension to this year's table. Further education colleges, universities, junior boarding schools and private language schools all make up the strongest risers of 2026, reflecting the broadening of the ELT landscape.

In 2025, the South West (SW), South East (SE) and London (LDN) appeared to have a higher concentration of the top scoring schools. This year, there is a more even geographical distribution of quality. Among those scoring 10, two are based in London, one in the South East, one in the South West, and two in the North. Now, let's take another look at our rising stars.

The number of institutions in the midlands and the north outweighs those in London and the South, adding to an emerging trend of geographical diversification.

Whilst the South East remains the largest sector in this year's rankings, its prominence has taken a clear hit. Reduced from 26 to 19, the South East faces competition from the Midlands and North, where 15 of the 2026 institutions are based, compared to 9 last year. Meanwhile, London is continuing its steady increase from 12 in 2024, 15 in 2025 and 17 in 2026.

Young learners

One substantial shift in the rankings data is the lean towards younger learners. The *EL Gazette* table includes the minimum for both year-round and summer ages, making it easy to track and compare ELT trends across the years. 2026 reveals a stronger presence of young learners, reflecting a desire to make learning more accessible.

Whilst there is not much change to the year-round age, there is significant change to the summer age. The number of schools with a summer minimum age of under 16 increased from 40 to 47 whilst those with a minimum age of 18+ decreased from 10 to 7.

The data shows a strong tie between young learners and summer courses. Each new entrant this year offers a summer minimum age, 9 of which are below 16. Two of these entrants are summer only schools, both with minimum ages set under 10.

Student hours

In the 2026 rankings, summer schools and courses have increased their presence. Summer schools have increased from 15 to 17 with two new entrants: ELAC Study Vacations and Ardmore Language School.

English UK's statistics report in 2023 showed that the average stay of juniors in their member schools was 4.1 weeks compared to 8.9 weeks for adults. In 2024, the data showed a slight decline with an average of 3.4 week stay for juniors.[9] In May 2026, English UK confirmed a 4.8% decline in full-time, face-to-face courses and 10.9% less student weeks compared to 2024.[10] Combined with *EL Gazette*'s rankings, this suggests that a preference for shorter courses is emerging in ELT particularly in relation to the junior market.

By offering shorter courses, institutions are able to provide quality education and cultural immersion for students without requiring long periods of commitment. Given that staying in the UK is increasing in difficulty, we would not be surprised if short courses and summer schools increase in popularity.

Brooke House College	MID	7	9.5
Brunel University London	LDN	7.5	9
De Montfort University	MID	6.8	8.4
NCG Liverpool	N	7	8.5
NCG Manchester	N	6.5	8.5
New College Durham	N	7	9.5
Stafford House Canterbury	SE	7.5	8.5
Stafford House London	LDN	7.5	8.5

[9] (English UK, 2024)
[10] (English UK, 2026)

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What does premium English language education look like for professionals?

For international professionals, learning English is no longer simply about mastering vocabulary and grammar. The real challenge is using the language effectively when the stakes are higher: contributing to a meeting, presenting an idea, negotiating with a client or building trust with colleagues from different cultures.

So what should a premium English language experience look like for the professionals who rely on English every day?

At The London School of English, we believe it starts with recognising that professional learners need a highly personalised approach. Founded in 1912, the school focuses exclusively on adults, with particular expertise in English for professionals.

Small classes are central to this approach. Business and Professional English courses have a maximum of six participants, creating more opportunities for meaningful conversation, individual feedback and focused support from the trainer. Before anyone arrives, each participant completes a detailed profile and English level assessment. This means they are placed in the right class and their trainer understands their individual objectives from day one.

We also believe learning should extend beyond the classroom. Regular workshops bring industry professionals into the school to share their expertise, giving participants the opportunity to engage with current issues while using their English in an authentic professional context.

The London School of English has once again been recognised by *EL Gazette*, ranking joint top in its School Rankings with a score of 10/10. The school also achieved 15 out of 15 strengths in its most recent British Council inspection.

For us, these recognitions are encouraging, but they are not the end goal. The real measure of quality is whether learners leave with the confidence and ability to communicate effectively when it matters.

