

“4 weeks have ended so fast! I’ve got new friends all around the world! Thank you VacStuds!”



Residential
English
Language
Courses
10-17 Years

summer
2011

Vacational
Studies®

www.vacstuds.com



“Best 4 weeks of my life... and it’s all thanks to VacStuds!”

Residential English language courses

Vacational Studies Courses have been running for 38 years. We have tried in this time to develop an enjoyable balance between 'vacation' and 'study'. Here is our programme for Summer 2011.

the courses

Accredited by the British Council

Vacational Studies is 'Accredited by The British Council' and is a member of English UK – formerly ARELS (The Association of Recognised English Language Services) – a professional body, membership of which is granted only after thorough inspection by The British Council and re-inspection every four years. We were last inspected in 2007 and are Accredited until March 2012.

About this brochure

This is an Information Book. The first part (this section) gives you a factual overview of the work we do, so you can decide if we are right for your youngster. The second part ('News 2010-2011') is written in a different style so you have an idea of my personality which necessarily influences the atmosphere on the Courses. It gives a more detailed rationale of the 2011 Courses and what has shaped them, so you and your son or daughter will be fully informed and can prepare for the experience. If your application is accepted, both sections are essential reading. In particular, 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the second section deals with fundamental issues and must be read.

What we try to do

Vacational Studies tries to create a totally international Course with students from as many different countries as possible, including Britain. We avoid accepting a large number of students from any particular country. In this way we try to ensure that English is the main medium of communication among the students. By using English not just as a school subject but as a living language, we hope our students will realise better its importance and value. Our students want to use English to make friends. This element of self-motivation greatly increases their fluency.

The emphasis on the practical use of English is combined with a full sports, entertainment and excursion programme helping young people to learn 'English internationally'. But it is more than this...

Residence

The Courses are all fully residential. Students eat, sleep and receive classes in the School.

The students

We accept boys and girls – near-beginners, intermediate and more advanced students – aged 10 to 17. The Courses are orientated around sports, activities and competition and encourage good social development in a community situation.

Students who will benefit

Please make sure that our Course is suitable for your child and that he/she wants to come. Those who will benefit and we enjoy having with us will be internationally-minded, interested in English, outgoing, gregarious and able to function independently. They will also be willing to accept the constraints of community living. We consider it so

important that our standards and expectations are understood and accepted that we ask parents to confirm that they and their children have read the rules and that they agree to abide by them. A slip sent with the rules is provided for this purpose.

How they will benefit

We hope that our students will learn a great deal of English, make good friendships and develop a positive international feeling. As well as formal study, we concentrate on the holiday aspect of the Course. While we try to involve students in all activities, we naturally respect the wishes of those who like to read quietly or be with friends. Over the years, we have built up an excellent reputation with parents and young people all over the world. Many boys and girls spend several summers with us renewing old friendships and making new ones. Students from the '70s and '80s are now sending their children. Most students come to us on personal recommendation. The numbers at each of the 4 Schools are deliberately kept quite small so that the staff can get to know everybody and treat each young person as an individual.

Choice of Course

The Course is divided for sports and competition purposes into 4 School houses. All are on the Mary Hare School campus. The 4 Schools are:-

Cheam	Wednesday 13 July – Wednesday 10 August 2011 (4 weeks)
Douai	Wednesday 13 July – Wednesday 10 August 2011 (4 weeks)
Hawtreys	Wednesday 13 July – Wednesday 10 August 2011 (4 weeks)
Mary Hare	Wednesday 13 July – Wednesday 10 August 2011 (4 weeks)

The School and surrounding

The Mary Hare School is near Newbury in Berkshire. Newbury is a small country town in a pleasant part of southern England in the Berkshire Downs. It is 70km west of London and 45km south of Oxford.



the school

The Mary Hare School

The Mary Hare School is a campus comprising several buildings that we have used since 1982. Various architectural styles are represented. There are formal gardens and woodland and extensive grounds which include several playing fields, a range of tennis courts, a gymnasium and a large indoor swimming pool.





the programme

The teaching

We use Task-Based Learning. The emphasis in lessons is to help develop the students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through a topic and task-based approach. This involves working with students on a variety of activities centred on a particular topic and helping them with the language needed to complete the activities. In 2011 part of the teaching programme will be to create a film script; use the script as a basis for language-study; film the script; edit the film; download the film onto Shutterfly accessible from 'Latest News' on our web site. The students will use English as a working language. We try to give students materials and activities that are different from those in their own countries. Oral and written English are taught and there is an emphasis on conversation practice. A prize is awarded on each Course for academic excellence. For 2011, we are incorporating new teaching resources from the Cambridge and Oxford University Press series which complement the class film project. These will focus on areas of grammar and vocabulary in a fun way as well as develop learners' overall communicative competence through task-based Learning activities. Special attention will be given to improving students' pronunciation. Our native UK reps and sports /social crew will be available during lesson time to help our students overcome their pronunciation difficulties on a one-to-one basis so that they may be able to express themselves more clearly and with greater confidence. There will be special lessons covering a variety of practical written genres, such as formal and informal e-mails.

A staff of professional teachers with experience of the teaching of English, give 4 lessons, each of 45 minutes, every day except Sunday and excursion days = 15 hours per week. In addition, there is a 30 minute 'homework' period each afternoon. Classes are graded according to age and ability in English. Students are placed first in an 'assessment group' and complete a range of oral and written tasks, including a formal placement test. The combined results of these tasks together with the teacher's opinion eventually determine placement in a class. Class placements are constantly reviewed and students may be moved to more or less advanced classes, according to their performance. The teacher:student ratio is approximately 1:12. Maximum class size is 16. We provide all books and teaching materials. A Certificate of Attendance is sent at the end of the Course. This Certificate is accepted in some countries as justification for a state bursary. For example, the Italian Ministry of Education has decreed that a Certificate issued by a British Council Accredited School counts towards the Italian School Leaving Certificate. In Monaco, a bursary can be applied for.

Sports

Sport is an important part of the Course. The Sports/Social Organiser for each School arranges a regular programme including football, basketball, volleyball, baseball, tennis, table-tennis, swimming, etc. Inter-school competitions run throughout the Course. There is also 'Sports Day' when the Schools meet for friendly competitions in the major sports.

We take all practicable safety precautions – for example, students using the swimming pool are always supervised by staff.

Social activities

We try to create a relaxed and friendly 'family' atmosphere in which young people will feel 'at home' quickly and make good social contacts.

A typical day

08.15	Breakfast
09.00	First class
09.45	Break
09.55	Second class
10.40	Break
11.10	Third class
11.55	Break
12.05	Fourth class
12.50	Break
13.00	Lunch
13.45	'Homework'
14.15	Break
14.45	Organised sports and games
18.00	Evening meal
19.00	Games, films, etc.
21.00	Hot chocolate and biscuits
21.30	'Club'
22.30	Bedtime (or 22.45)

Pocket money and stamps are obtainable from the office every day from 13.20 - 13.45 and 14.15 - 14.45.





Shopping afternoons (optional extra)

In addition to the organised excursions (which are included in the Course Fee), there are one or two optional shopping afternoons which are not included in the Course Fee. These are in Newbury or another town near the School. We think it safe for young people to shop in these towns unaccompanied by staff, if parents have indicated their agreement to this on the Application Form. This helps them achieve a measure of independence. Younger students can be accompanied by staff if parents or we so wish. There will be several staff in the town while our students are shopping. Travel is by private coach from the School with accompanying staff. The cost of transport (payable by students if they wish to go) is about £8.

Theatre visits (optional extra)

Tickets for smash-hit West End musicals that are booked out months in advance have been requested and we will be allocated a limited number. Students who apply early enough will be able to see one of these shows. The cost of each (show + travel to the theatre) will be in the range £30–£50. The cost should be added to pocket money. If it is not possible to provide a ticket, the money will be returned with the student at the end of the Course.

Tennis lessons

Tennis may be played at any time. Lessons are not needed. In 2011 professional coaching will be given on request at no extra charge for beginners and those who wish to develop their skills.

Food safety

Vacational Studies policy is not to serve any food about which there is any concern for any reason. We serve only what we believe parents would feel safe to serve their own children in their own homes.

“The best days
of my life”



Here is a typical menu for guidance:-

Breakfast:

Choice of cereal

Choice of various breads, meats, cheese, fruit

Jam, marmalade, other spreads

Tea, coffee, milk, fresh orange juice

Lunch:

Choice of one cold or three hot dishes

Buffet-style salad bar

Choice of desserts

Fresh fruit

Dinner:

Choice of one cold or three hot dishes

Buffet-style salad bar

Choice of desserts

Fresh fruit

Before bedtime:

Hot chocolate and biscuits



Meals

Food is an important part of the Course. Meals are prepared by professional caterers to a high standard. Our specification for lunch and dinner is a choice of hot dishes (including one vegetarian) or a cold dish, choice from a salad bar comprising about ten different items, a choice of desserts and fresh fruit. Students can have the first choice they want and can return for another choice as 'seconds'. If they cannot find anything they like, they can ask us to ask the caterer to prepare something special.

There is always a vegetarian option. Other special diets can be catered for. Cold orange juice or other drinks are available at no charge. There is a small 'tuck shop'.

At times throughout the Course, the menu will be varied to include, for example, barbecues (spare rib, hamburger, jacket potatoes, coleslaw dip, crisps, ice-cream, etc.) There will be a traditional British 'Christmas Dinner' (roast turkey with stuffing, roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cranberry jelly) and an 'English High Tea' (sandwiches, scones, jam and cream.) There may also be 'national meals'. If they wish, students from various countries can advise the kitchen staff on how to prepare and serve a meal consisting of dishes from their own country. Any student

can join the Food Committee which meets the Caterer regularly to discuss all aspects of the catering.

How we encourage the use of English

In each School there are students from many different countries. We try to ensure a mixture of nationalities in classes and dormitories. We aim to stimulate the speaking of English socially in various ways. Members of staff and the British student(s) constantly encourage English-speaking.

The 'currency' of the Course is the 'VacStud' or 'vaccle'. Vaccles' are given by staff for English-speaking and good work. 'Vaccles' can be used to pay for treats such as going to head of the queue in the dining room, or having time on the internet. Students can be fined in 'vaccles' for not using English.

The four Schools are mixed by nationality, gender and age. Sports and activities are played as House Competitions for House Points. House Points can also be deducted. The House with the most Points is awarded a Treat. A Treat can be given at any stage in the Course and another Treat will be given at the end. We intend that the House Points and the Treats that are awarded from these will be positive inducements for participating.



The Course Fee includes:-

- residence at the School
- travel Heathrow-Mary Hare / Mary Hare -Heathrow ¹
- all meals ²
- tuition
- the sports programme
- the use of facilities
- excursions ³
- insurance ⁴
- the laundering of clothes ⁵

The Course Fee does not include:-

- pocket money
- optional church/theatre/shopping visits
- travel to and from England

There are NO EXTRA CHARGES except for optional church, theatre or shopping visits. A deduction of £8 is made from pocket money to provide indoor board games and records, tapes and CDs for the 'Club'. £20 'caution money' will be retained in the student's pocket money account until the last day when it will be returned less deductions for damages (if any).

¹ At specified times and terminals – see 'Travel'

² Except lunch on excursions, but including lunch on Sports Day

³ Travel and supervision, not entrance fees

⁴ As described in the 'Insurance' slip

⁵ If washable at 40°+, not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk



Health

Minor illnesses are treated by our own staff. There is a Matron. We also use the services of doctors in the locality. The St John Ambulance Service provides training for all our staff at the start of the Course in the latest methods of basic first aid and resuscitation. We ask parents to give us full health information on the Application Form. We request that those with food allergies come with a 1ml. Adrenaline (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen – an ‘EpiPen’. Children of EU/EEA nationality should bring an EHIC (European Insurance Health Card), available from their health service, entitling them as temporary residents to the same free treatment under the British National Health Service as British citizens for all, including pre-existing, conditions.

Religion

The Courses are interdenominational. If parents so wish, we shall arrange for Catholic or other students to attend an appropriate service. Please indicate this on the Application Form. Transportation to and from the church is payable by students.

Residential accommodation

At all Schools, students sleep in dormitories. Girls are in one part of the house, boys are in another.

Insurance

Every student is covered by a special Insurance Policy while they are with us. For full details see Insurance & Fees. Briefly, the Insurance includes refund of full Course Fees if certified serious illness or accident to the student or parent during the month before the Course prevents

attendance on the Course; private emergency medical treatment to the value of £1,000,000; personal possessions and luggage cover; personal money cover; return if air fare is lost because of delayed or advanced departure through illness or accident while the student is with us. Personal accident insurance is included.

There is no extra charge for this Insurance. Every student is automatically covered (subject to the stated conditions) when the application is accepted.

How we look after students

We understand the concern felt by parents when their sons and daughters are away from home. They are under constant supervision, as far as is practicable, both in the School and on excursions. Our total staff:student ratio of about 1:7 ensures that our students are well looked-after.

In addition to the staff, in each School we aim to have a native English-speaking ‘UK Rep’ and there may be one or two older ex-students, ‘Staff Helpers’, to assist with the sports and entertainment programme.

During the Course, progress reports are sent to all parents describing performance in class and also social behaviour. At the end of the Course, all parents are sent a final report and leaving certificate together with a report from the Director on the student’s general progress and behaviour.

If there is a problem

We shall contact you. Parents must ensure that we have a telephone number through which they can always be reached. If it is an emergency and we cannot reach you, we shall contact the person named in section 8 (our ‘emergency contact’) on the Application Form. If we cannot contact either of you, we shall assume your authority to act ‘in loco parentis’ and in a medical emergency, for example, give consent to appropriate medical treatment. We send students a list of rules and standards of behaviour expected before the Course begins. These are straightforward. Basically, we expect students to obey the law, respect the buildings, equipment and the feelings of other people and to show good manners. Students must read and know the rules before they come.

If a student is correctly motivated (see section on ‘Students who will benefit’), there should be no discipline problems. If any should arise, we reserve the right to contact parents and, if we consider it necessary, require that he/she be taken home at the parents’ expense without refund of Fees. Details of reasons for expulsion are in the ‘Notes for Parents’ and ‘Notes for Students’. Parents sign their agreement to all our conditions on the ‘Agreement and Travel Details’ form. We also reserve the right to send the writer of the original ‘letter of recommendation’ a photocopy of any correspondence we enter into.





how to apply



How to apply

Answer all the questions on the Application Form and return it to us with (if this is a first application) a letter of recommendation from the school on behaviour and attitude to study. We shall tell you immediately if the application is acceptable and for which Course. A 'waiting list' operates when the Schools are full.

Letter of recommendation

To ensure that all our students are well-motivated and keen to participate, we ask that a brief letter of recommendation from the school accompanies all applications from new students. This need mention only behaviour and attitude to study. No such letter is needed for students we already know or, exceptionally, when this might cause conflict with educational authorities.

When the application is accepted

We shall write to inform you of this and include our Invoice for the Course Fees. The Invoice can be settled in full immediately, or 50% can be paid immediately and the balance by the date shown on the Invoice. The place is confirmed when the full Course Fees have been received by us. We shall also request travel details.

How to pay

Please see the 'Course Fees' section.

Pocket Money

Pocket money can either be brought by students (as cash or a £ cheque drawn on a British bank, payable to 'Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C') or sent in advance to the National Westminster Bank, 30 Market Place, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5AJ in £ Sterling to Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 65400100 (IBAN number GB19 NWBK 6015 0765 4001 00) or in euro to Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 10388494 (IBAN number GB19 NWBK 6072 0610 3884 94).

Our BIC number is: NWBK GB 2L. We also have a £ Sterling Girobank account for personal money. The number is 255 7444. We do not recommend an amount, but students will tend to bring about £350. Optional tennis coaching fees and the cost of theatre visit(s) should be added (if applicable). Do not send more money during the Course.

Clothes & Possessions

Notes and advice on what to bring and other information will be sent to parents and students in advance.

“She had a fantastic time and made lots of new friends of all ages and nationalities.”





travel

It is quite usual for our students to fly alone. 90% of our students arrive and depart in this way. There are many cut-price air ticket offers. The cheapest tickets are to be found on the airline's web site, NOT by phone and NOT via a travel agent. We operate a collection and return transport service between Heathrow Airport and the Schools on arrival and departure dates at no charge, subject to certain conditions. We shall operate our free collection service for flights arriving at Heathrow Terminals 1, 3, 4 and 5 from 12.00 to 16.00 on 13 July and our free return service to check-in students on outgoing flights departing from Heathrow Terminals 1, 3, 4 and 5 from 09.50 to 13.00 on 10 August. We shall arrange a taxi/minibus service at cost with known drivers for collections/returns that are not part of our free service. If flights arrive earlier than 12.00, students wait for our staff near the Information Desk. If flights leave after 13.00, we explain the procedure and take students to wait in the correct area.

For young children (under 12), airlines operate an 'Unaccompanied Young Persons (UYP)' or 'Unaccompanied Minors (UM)' service on request and look after them. As airlines insist on a named person meeting and returning a child and that the person remains until the flight has departed, parents should note that if they request UYP or UM service, all UYP or UM departures before 09.50 or after 13.00 must be by taxi at cost. The driver is known to us and has been working with us for many years. He will meet students and check them in personally. It is normally unnecessary for students over 12 to be booked to fly UYP or UM. Airlines (especially British Airways) are very helpful with young passengers at any age.

"I've been in Mary Hare since I was 10 and it's incredible how after 9 years there, seven as student and 2 as staff, I can't get bored, every year is so different there's something every summer that makes the course so special!"

Our free standard service cannot be used when arrival is later or departure is earlier than our stated dates or times, or if the flight is via Gatwick, Luton or Stansted, or if a student is booked UYP or UM, or is outside our requested times. We can make special taxi or minibus arrangements on your behalf. We do not charge for making these arrangements, but the cost of the taxi or minibus is payable by the student. (As a guide, a one-way taxi for one person to Heathrow is about £95 and to Gatwick about £130. For two or more people, the cost is shared). Special requirements should be indicated on the Application Form and details sent separately.

At the airport

Before travelling, we send an identity badge and luggage tags to ensure quick recognition. Our representatives will carry blue Vocational Studies' folders and will meet students at the entrance to the Arrivals Hall after leaving the Customs Hall.

Staff collecting students on 13 July will be contactable on these UK phone numbers:-

Terminal 1 – 07810 313993; Terminal 3 – 07879 077777;
Terminal 4 – 07901 996592; Terminal 5 – 07867 571967.

If you come by car

Road directions are given after the School's address.

Parents bringing students are asked to arrive at between 12.30 and 14.30. Parents collecting students on the last day are asked to arrive before 11.00.

On arrival at the school

All money is handed in at the Office for safe keeping. Students can withdraw money every day. We keep passports and tickets safely. We cannot accept responsibility for pocket money or valuables not handed to us.

On the first day

On request, students will be allocated to a returning student who will act as a guide, explaining the layout of the building, the way the Course runs and answering any questions.



The Mary Hare School address and directions

From London, follow M4 to Exit 13 (Newbury). Leave M4 and follow signs to 'Services' and then 'Donnington'. Continue for 2 kms. The Mary Hare School is signposted on the right.

Address for students' letters:

The Mary Hare School, Newbury Berkshire RG14 3BQ.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (01635) 244221 International: +44 1635 244221

Payphone (for students):

National: (01635) 244261 International: +44 1635 244261

The telephone numbers and address given above are only for use during the Courses. During the rest of the year, please use our Newbury Office address and telephone numbers detailed in 'Contact Us'.

Directions by rail

By train from London, leave from Paddington Station. Arrive at Newbury Station. There are normally taxis at Newbury Station. If not, there are taxi numbers in the phone box near the Station.

Visits to the schools

Visits to the School outside the Course dates may be made only by appointment through our Newbury Office.



Finally

We have tried to describe the Courses fully and frankly. Please also see the section 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the news section. This contains more detailed information on various aspects of the Course. It is essential reading for the parents of Course participants and is not only a résumé of the previous summer. We hope our web site contains all the information you need to make your choice. Any further details you may require can be obtained from the parents of our past students and past students themselves and the Director. We suggest you contact our 'parental references' as they may offer useful advice.

Our Courses are designed with the benefit of years of experience and we are confident that we can combine the learning of good written and spoken English with an unforgettable and enjoyable holiday.



news – summer 2010

'We sent you a daughter, a little bit shy – and after one month we had a daughter that is performing in singing, dancing and so on. When I met her at the airport, she was so tired, but her eyes glittered. We can't stop listening to everything she tells us. Amazing!' (a Swedish parent); '4 weeks have ended so fast! I've got new friends all around the world! Thank you VacStuds!' (a Russian student); 'Best month ever!' (a Portuguese student); 'Best 4 weeks of my life... and it's all thanks to VacStuds!' (a Mozambican student); 'The best days of my life' (a Portuguese student); 'The four weeks have been fantastic, everything has been great, all from Mr and Mrs Cheam to Casino. I have gotten new friends from all over the world, thanks Vacstuds! I love this course, and I'll hopefully be back at Mary Hare on Cheam side in 2011' (a Norwegian student); 'Best month of my entire life, Vacstuds. Thank you all' (a British student); 'The best 4 weeks of my life. Looking forward to 2011' (a Bulgarian student); 'I was at Douai... 1992, 1993, 1994 and Cheam 1995... hope to remember right! So much time has passed by... but memories are so present! One of my most forming experiences. I still cry thinking about those days' (an Italian student from the '90s on Facebook); 'Thank you very much for taking such good care of my daughter. She had a fantastic time and made lots of new friends of all ages and nationalities' (a Greek parent); 'My wife and I would like to thank you and your team for the fantastic time you gave him' (a Dutch parent); 'I've just arrived home and I just couldn't wait to say thank you for this wonderful month. I've been in Mary Hare since I was 10 and it's incredible how after 9 years there, seven as student and 2 as staff, I can't get bored, every year is so different there's something every summer that makes the course so special! I've realised I got a feeling that probably no one or only a few who have seen how Vacstuds has changed: the English only day, the sports day with 3 schools, the casino song, all the Folies Bergères, the Vacstuds forum, the 'make me smile', film project, magazines... It's not easy to find someone who knows as much as I do about Mary Hare now... I feel a special emotion when I talk or think of Mary Hare. I just can't imagine the idea of being far from Mary Hare! I've grown up there and Mary Hare at the same time with me! I'd like to say thank you for this opportunity. It's been great to be at Mary Hare 2010. It's been one of my best years there, an excellent staff team led by a fantastic SSO, an amazing group of teachers that made the students enjoy the lessons as I have never seen before and an awesome Course Manager!' (a Spanish student, Staff Helper and now staff); 'My best holidays in my life! Friends, fun, English lessons, sports, visits, a beautiful place' (a Monegasque student from the '90s on Facebook); 'This experience will last for a longer time than only the month at Mary Hare, and thanks to you finally in a positive, constructive way on what we can build on further' (a Dutch parent); 'I think the adults get just as much out of it as the children' (a teacher).



I need hardly say more. For 38 years, Vacational Studies has been my life and I am privileged to have played a part in the lives of so many people. I hope to continue to do so for a while longer.

And the summer of 2010 that was such a developmental period for almost 200 youngsters? Read on.

Summer 2010 remembered

With the Jet Steam just to south of us, 2010 was the summer of hardly any rain, but generally grey skies with the occasional brilliant day that makes England such a beautiful country.

This summer was the last for Cheam and the first for getting to know the students really well during the 'ideal student process'. It was a summer of reflection. After 35 years at Cheam, I might be forgiven for being nostalgic. Indeed I was presented with my very own memory book 'Cheam 1975–2010' at the final dinner at Cheam containing photos and memories from those who were there in the '70s, '80s and '90s and an England flag with the signatures of everyone who was there in this, Cheam's last summer. 'Sadly Cheam has had its day' ran the words of the 2010 Cheam song and, sadly, it has, but I felt no nostalgia, just excitement at the prospect in 2011 of four schools in one at Mary Hare, a far more sensible arrangement which will avoid duplication of effort and enable the focus to be on one campus and to encourage senior staff to take on management roles in developing new ideas in teaching and pastoral care. We will also use the four Schools concept to promote on a daily basis the spirit of competition that my own sons find such a motivating factor in their school lives.

Back for a third summer at Mary Hare was Tom Goodwin fortified by two years practising for the role and really enjoying it this time. On the teaching side, we had Joe Wallis back for his fourth year with us now as a DELTA-qualified Director of Studies. He led a strong team of teachers. Chloe Huelamo was back for her fourth year with us and will be sponsored by Vacational Studies on a DELTA Course in 2011. Karen Damianou (née Thompson) was also back for a fourth year, this time as Senior Teacher and Assistant Course Manager. Nico Damianos returned for a third time. Jon Iveson and Dale Ogilvy returned for a second summer. Newcomers were Katy Hubble, Ashley Griffiths, Craig Johnson, Mario Bellu, Matt Midgley, Mark Stothart and Lauren Bickley. Charlie Horwood returned for the third time, now as Sports/Social Organiser. As Sports Assistants, former UK reps Ashley Raghu and Lewis Weaver were back for a second summer as was Charlie Fry; Alastair Cockburn was back for his third; Mónica García was back for her 10th year in total. Meg Clements kept everyone healthy as Matron for her third year. Staff Helpers were Kari Anne Haugli (Norway) and Jan Gulkowski (Poland). UK Reps were the superb James Guest and the equally superb Arnov Sengupta. Sam Matthews (UK Rep 2009) returned briefly in preparation for a possible staff application in 2011. The prize for Academic Excellence was awarded to Charlotte Robin (Monaco); for English-speaking to Luca Parisi (Italy). The students were generally excellent and motivated. I was able to speak in depth to all of them via 'the process' which I mention in a later paragraph.

Mike Sutton bravely took on the final summer at Cheam as a brand new Course Manager. He remained his calm and kind self throughout. On the teaching side, back for a second year, was Emma Whitehouse as Senior Teacher ably assisted by second-timers Rich Dolphin, Emily Hull and Justin McNeillie and newcomers Alex McLintock, Helen Roo, Bernardo Savill and Sarah Thompson. Ex UK Rep and Assistant Sports, Hugh Irving, was back for the third time, now as Sports Social Organiser helped as Assistant Staff by second-timers Adam Watkin and Rachel Lewis (ex Mary Hare) with Matt Jamieson and Ali Pearson (also ex-UK Reps.) Back for a second summer, Pam Ginns was simply indefatigable as Matron and Assistant Course Manager.

Staff Helpers were Yannick Mol (Netherlands) and Kathy Storm (Norway). The splendid Aaron Murphy and Toby Clutterbuck were the much loved UK Reps. Joe MacDonald and Johannes Stauffenberg (UK Reps in 2009) returned in various stages of undress for a few days as preparation for possible staff applications in 2011. The prize for academic excellence was awarded to Alice Stål (Sweden); for English-speaking to Frederico Silva (Portugal).

Joe Wallis returned for a fifth year, formerly as teacher and Senior Teacher, now as Director of Studies. He was a familiar sight at both Schools, helping and advising the teachers and working with newly re-revised material on the task-based teaching programme involving film creation which he devised with former Course Manager, Joe Littenberg. In addition to the induction sessions at both schools, he ran a Teacher Development project covering such varied topics as error correction and pronunciation.

Appearing at both schools, often accompanied by three nine-and-a-half year-olds called Piers, Ian and Lars, was Helen Skinner, my talented ChildCare Assistant who explored the woods and grounds with them, played with them all day and kept them very happy indeed.

Also at both schools was Jon Ireland, my PA who became subsumed into being Tom Goodwin's and then Mike Sutton's. Not only was Jon remarkably efficient in keeping the administration at each school running efficiently, but he proved to be a natural photographer, so many of the photos this year are his handiwork rather than mine.

Tennis coaching this year was provided by Matt Debney, the first tennis professional we have had who has wanted to become a part of the Course and join in with its social life. Indeed, he loved his involvement so much that in 2011 he will become a regular resident Assistant Sports crew member and provide tennis coaching as a no-charge optional part of the Course. Vacational Studies is sponsoring him to become a qualified lifeguard to be in charge of the pool.

The regular discos were provided by 'Pink Elephant Roadshow'. The students loved them.

And there was me – visiting each school several times a day praising, admonishing, checking, filming and photographing, dispensing justice – once again a deus ex Mercedes, sometimes ex Renault Espace – and loving every moment, of course.

Vacational Studies Photos and Film Clips

The idea of communicating with parents via photos and film clips of their children having a great time that I introduced in 2009 was continued with the enhancement of trying to show this great time while it was being had, so day and night my computer uploaded onto Shutterfly the daily photos and video clips that were on my EOS 7 and Ixus. At the same time, I was filming with my HD video camera for the end of Course 'VacStuds 2010 All Over Again' DVD. The response from parents has been very positive. One told me she was getting little work done in the office, checking to see when the next batch would appear. Everyone was reassured that their children were having a great time. Wherever I went, I was Quasimodo, bedecked in an SLR camera, a digital camera and HD film camera. I shall carry on keeping parents updated about what is happening.

Teaching Programme

This year, more than half the teaching programme was devoted to the film project and the remainder of the time to more conventional teaching. The



class films have been uploaded to Shutterfly rather than onto CD. The storylines of the films is far better than before as the Director of Studies and Senior Teachers were prescriptive about content. The film project is demanding on teachers and will be further revised in 2011 so that, while the filming is happening, those not actually involved will transfer to another class for the duration. Joe Wallis and Emma Whitehouse will work together on ideas for the development of the teaching programme which will include a concept that I raised with Joe this summer – 'relevant writing'. Communication via writing has changed its focus and exchanges via e-mail, text and Facebook are now an integral part of how we lead our lives. I have asked that this be reflected in classroom activities. 'Relevant writing' was started during the last week of this season and will be integrated into classroom teaching in 2011, as will the compilation of the diary-style student portfolio that is part of the 'ideal student process'.

For 2011, Vacational Studies has incorporated brand new teaching resources from the Cambridge and Oxford University Press series which complement the class film project. These will focus on areas of grammar and vocabulary in a fun way as well as develop learners' overall communicative competence through Task-based Learning activities. Special attention will be given to improving students' pronunciation as we found out during the 'ideal student process' that this was a particularly weak area among learners. Our native UK reps and Sports and Social crew will be available during lesson time to help our students overcome their pronunciation difficulties on a one-to-one basis so that they may be able to express themselves more clearly and with greater confidence. Following student feedback this summer, there will be special lessons covering a variety of practical written genres such as formal and informal e-mails – an area students perceived to be useful for English exams and future study.

UK Reps

The change from 'British Students' to 'UK Reps' was very successful in 2010. They lived with the students, were subject to the same rules, but they arrived with the staff and were allocated to help classes by the Director of Studies and Senior Teachers. As they can be of great help in creating an English-speaking environment, we shall offer a place at each school to Norwich School as for the past two decades. UK Reps come to us under stringent conditions. They were 'on probation' for the first week. At the end of this week, we decided if they should stay. The awareness of the tenuous nature of their place seems to be a motivating factor and will be continued in 2011.

Sports Day

With touch-rugby as an innovation and the old favourites, girls' and boys' football, junior and senior teams, volleyball, softball, basketball, tennis, dancing and singing, there was something for everyone at Sports Day and everybody was in one event or another. For the last time, the arrival of the visiting bus at Mary Hare was greeted with the traditional chants, banners and a hysteria of conflicting loyalties. The day itself was fine and dry and all the events went off as planned. There was mixed seating at the excellent buffet dinner and various relationships were struck up there and at the disco afterwards. 'We love Mary Hare' was on the poster in the Cheam bus and 'mighty, mighty, VacStuds' were the words of the song as it drove off. A great day for the last two-cornered Sports Day. From 2011, it will be a four-cornered event.

Catering

Catering at Mary Hare was by their Catering Manager, Paul Leverton. I enjoyed all my meals there. Once again, the catering staff entered into the spirit of the Course, decorating the dining room for Christmas, Valentine's Day or whatever the event might be. Nothing was too much trouble. Sodexo catered at Cheam again with Nick Dann in charge. My sons love Nick's catering when they eat at Cheam during the school year and always compare mine unfavourably. He did not disappoint this time. Each School had its Food Committee, but they had little to comment on and the catering ran smoothly.

'The Process'

I have often wondered how I can encourage the students who come to us to realise just what a remarkable opportunity it is to be with young people from all over the world and of so many different cultures. This is an experience, structured linguistically and socially, to help them grow up. This year, I tried, as an experiment, a 'process'. In this process, each student was invited to compile a portfolio to include some ideas on why they thought they had come to us; what they could gain from the experience; what they did to gain from the experience; what effect it had on them and on other people.

In the second week, each student appeared in a group of 12 or so at a 'Board Meeting' comprising several staff of which I was Chairman. At the Board Meeting, each student was invited to reflect on the Course experience with reference to the above concepts, using the portfolio as an aide memoire.

I called the process, 'making the ideal international student' because the ideal international student is what each person could become. To add some competition, I decided that there should be a prize at the end of it – an iPad. There was an intake of breath when this was announced. I had happened on the ideal, must-have gizmo of 2010. So each student had the chance to win an iPad.

All the students were invited back in the last week to opine before the Board on how the experience had been for them.

The result was remarkable. Almost everyone was reflective and sensitive to what the Course could do for them. Several told the Board how they felt they had benefited from the suggestion that they should reflect and that it had opened their eyes to possibilities that would have otherwise eluded them. The opportunity to take part in a formal conversation on an abstract subject disciplined their thought processes and obliged them to use a vocabulary that had been passive before.

Most students had an excellent awareness of the theory of how to benefit from the Course, but the Board also looked at how this was put into practice to see if the theory matched the reality and made its judgment accordingly.

It also gave us the chance to know every one of our students as never before.

As one of them astutely observed, there is no such thing as a single 'ideal student'. The shortlists were long and included many exceptional young people, but in terms of the all-round qualities we were looking for, there could only be one winner at each School, and I made the final selection based on advice from the Board. The iPads went to Juanpe Serna (Spain) at Mary Hare and Alice Stål (Sweden) at Cheam.

Parents, Children and Unrealisable Expectations

It is important that all parents read this section. The relationship between ourselves and the parents of children in our care is a partnership. We want all our young people to get the most out of the experience. For this reason, I have written a 'Parental Control Condition' into the contract we have with parents. In brief, I say 'We do our best to fulfil our 'duty of care' under English law based on good will and the trust established by your and your child's agreement to the 'rules' as evidenced by the signed 'Agreement and Travel Details' form. If we think a problem is likely to arise, we shall try to contact you before it does so it can be prevented. Nevertheless, if your child's attitude or behaviour is such that we find we cannot exercise the control required to fulfil our 'duty of care', we shall pass responsibility for control to the parent either by requesting the parent's presence or by telephone contact with the child. If this fails and we decide the child is beyond control, we shall expel.'

Generally we have excellent support from parents. Occasionally, we do not. There is no child who does not accept that they sometimes do wrong, make mistakes or act aberrationally. What children accept so readily is unacceptable to a tiny minority of parents. For their child to do wrong must mean that the child is a victim of circumstance and that someone else must be to blame. Some also find it hard to transfer responsibility for their child to a third party – us – and believe they must provide a constant input. All we ask is that parents leave everything to us, in the knowledge that (i) they will hear if there is a problem, (ii) no news is good news, (iii) we have experience in dealing with children, (iv) their child may make mistakes, (v) we shall try to work with them if the child does make a mistake, but (vi) if what their child does is serious enough for us to require that child's removal from the Course, they must comply at once.

We do what we can to encourage students to learn and use the Course to advantage. We do our best to look after them. We make no other claims. We cannot force a child to integrate. While we pro-vice encouragement, they must help themselves. They will find others who speak their language and they may be tempted to take the easy way. They may come with friends from home. We cannot keep friends apart. They must decide to broaden their international horizons, mix and use English. Parents may make requests, but we reserve the right to place students in what we consider to be appropriate classes and dormitories. The final report we write will be our frank assessment. As the teaching/learning situations are different, it may not be similar to the school report you are accustomed to. The Course is a communal experience. Individual freedom is restricted. Our school buildings are houses in a boarding school – not an hotel. Accommodation, washrooms, etc. are shared. Bathrooms may be away from dormitories. Clothes storage space may be limited. All sorts of compromises have to be made, but for most young people this is part of the fun. We also ask parents to accept that telephone contact with their children, especially in the first few days, is not a good idea. We ask that mobile phones are not brought. We are not being difficult, just putting into practice what we know from experience works. In effect, what we are requesting is a partnership between us based on our expertise and parents' trust in us. What we provide and the parameters of what we permit are in our literature. We act on the assumption that parents and students read it all. If your child is interested in drinking, smoking, going out at night and leading an independent life, please choose another organisation less restrictive than ours. We assume that parents will be realistic about their children. We exercise due control, but they have the freedom to do things that are wrong. If they do, there are repercussions outlined in the 'Notes'. We do what we can to prevent rule-breaking, but if it happens, parents must accept that it is occasioned by their child's free will, not lack of control on our part.

Let me put it into context. Ours is a new, exciting and active environment. Parental control appears absent. Our students are a long way from home, without the constraints and responsibilities that tend to check behavioural excess. No doubt there is also the desire to impress one's peers. They may call it 'being carried away'. Whatever the causes, occasionally a few of our students may indulge in behaviour that is simply anti-social. If they get caught, they may feel they have little to lose. Protected by this feeling that no one of importance will ever know, I am aware that some students have broken our rules and even the law. All students come to us after a 'letter of recommendation' has been written about them by their school. To remove

this feeling of anonymity and to encourage students to take responsibility for their own actions, we write frank reports to parents. We reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we have with parents about children in our care.

We have also noticed that some parents encourage children to break our rules. Henceforward this will constitute a breach of contract. I write more about this under 'Mobile Phones'.

Contacting Students

The students who adjust best are those whose parents phone them only on the two 'Telephone Sundays'. If these parents wish to know how their child is adjusting, they phone the Course Manager and ask.

There are some parents who feel they must speak to their children frequently. We ask parents who must speak to their children outside 'Telephone Sundays' to phone the payphone after 21.00, not our School Office number. We cannot search for children in a large building and campus. The payphone may ring unanswered. A student may answer it. If so, that student can be asked to search for a student. That student may or may not comply with the request.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are not useful in the context of the Course. The time young people spend with us develops their sense of independence. They need to be able to cope with small challenges on their own. An immediate call home at the first sign of a problem delays the growing up process that is a part of the experience we give young people. The only time a phone is useful is when a child is away from the school. We allow mobile phones to be used only on trip days and after 21.00 in the office after the first week. In line with UK Government Education Department advice on the possible health hazard for young people of microwaves near the developing brain in an enclosed environment, we do not permit students to use mobile phones freely inside the school. We prefer that a mobile phone is not brought. Any mobile phone brought must be kept in the office. We accept no responsibility for loss of or damage to mobile phones that are brought. Any mobile phone kept other than in the office will be removed. We shall treat in the same way as a mobile phone, a laptop computer and any music device that can contain a sim card.

Our restrictions on mobile phones are clear and in our rules to which parents have given their signed agreement. Just as parents have trusted us for 38 years to provide exactly what we describe, we trust parents to abide by the agreement they have signed. We have found that some parents have told their children not to hand in mobile phones or have given them a second phone to keep hidden. We cannot discipline children for the actions of parents who undermine us. By the same token we cannot accept responsibility for children who selectively break our rules at the request of parents. We consider this makes it impossible for us to exercise our duty of care. We shall consider this a breach of contract and request that the child be removed.

English Law

I state on the Application Form that this applies. There is nothing sinister about the inclusion of these words. We are de facto in loco parentis in the summer. We accept responsibility for looking after a large number of other people's children. We take this responsibility seriously. Parents trust us to make wise decisions. Sometimes, however, we receive requests which we consider unwise. For example, we are asked to let children be unaccompanied by staff when we consider they are not responsible enough to be unaccompanied. Children feel that, if they ask their parents to request something from us, we must comply with a parental request. We are the ones closest to what is happening. We know what a prudent parent would do and would not do in certain circumstances. Legally, we are expected to fulfil the role of a prudent parent – no more, no less. Sometimes we do not agree with what a parent is asking us to do. We shall use our discretion in all matters. Under English Law a parent may not sign away a child's rights. This includes the child's right to be protected by adults. We shall do what we think is right for the child. This is why I state that English Law applies.

Theatre Visits

Most students request a visit to the theatre. They are asked to choose which show they wish to see in order of preference on a form which shows the Invoice number. The earlier the application, the lower the Invoice number. Tickets are allocated by Invoice number. The lower the Invoice number, the greater the chance of getting one's choice of theatre visit. 2011 Invoice numbers start at 13997. A link to a downloadable 'Theatre Visits' choice list will be e-mailed in May. The cost of the visit is added to pocket money. If a ticket is not allocated, the money remains in pocket money. Tickets are, therefore, not 'ordered and paid for in advance'.



Property

We ask that valuable items (including expensive clothes) are not brought. All items with a used re-sale value over £40 must nevertheless be listed on the 'Valuable Possessions' form. At the end of the Courses we send back every named item of property left behind. Un-named items are also returned if we have a good idea to whom they belong. We can keep items in our office on request. While they are safer in our office than elsewhere, we accept responsibility only for items stored in our safe. Items given to us for safe-keeping are kept in our safe for the duration of the Course and are not removed at any time. Property not in our safe and lost other than when in the student's possession on a trip is not covered by the Insurance policy we include as part of the Course Fee. We accept no responsibility for mobile phones.

Health & EHIC

All students are entitled to free emergency treatment under the Medical Insurance policy included in the Course Fee for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. EU and EEA residents are entitled to free treatment under the National Health Service for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. Pre-existing conditions are not covered by our insurance. No one (not even an EU or EEA resident) is entitled to free treatment under the NHS for a pre-existing condition unless they have an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card). EHICs were introduced on 1 June 2004 and are available from Social Security or Health Department offices overseas. If an overseas Social Security or Health Department office states that an EHIC is not needed because free treatment for a pre-existing condition is available for anyone in the EU or EEA on a short stay, that advice is wrong and the office should contact the Department of Health on +44 20 7210 5318 for confirmation. If they have a pre-existing condition and do not have an EHIC, students should have their own medical insurance.

Lost Luggage

New arrangements for hand baggage mean that more cases are lost by airlines than before. We shall continue to help students who arrive with no luggage to buy necessary items, but as the contract the airlines have is with the passenger (not ourselves) they will not refund the cost to us. We shall inform parents what has happened and take the cost from pocket money. The airline will then reimburse the parent who will, we hope, have topped up the pocket money.

Excess Baggage

The economy class limit is 20 kilos. Airlines insist that luggage over 24 kilos is put in a second suitcase (which must be bought) and then there will be an additional charge of £100. Students must, therefore, bring less than 20 kilos of luggage.

VacStuds DVD

'VacStuds 2010 All Over Again' has been edited from footage I shot during the Courses and sent to those requesting it. Eventually everyone sees the Courses through my eyes. For those students wishing to relive the summer and for those parents trying to find out what made it 'the best summer of my life', here is an instant walk down Memory Lane. Parents of 2011 students who would like a preview can request a copy. Film clips also give a good picture of what life on the Course is like, so more of these will be put on the web site.

Before and During the Course

Parents are welcome to contact me on any matter. In July and August I can be anywhere. For practical reasons, therefore, it is best to make contact with me during the Courses on my mobile phone +44 7717 007 007 or, if it is to find out how a child is, the Course Manager is best placed to give this information on +44 1635 244 221.

Staff Helpers

If possible, we like to have a male and/or a female former student on each Course as unpaid helpers, providing a link between staff and students. They tend to be 18-21 and to have left a gap of one summer after being a student. SHs are chosen early in the new year. Potential SHs should contact me before Christmas. If 'leadership potential' or an equivalent phrase is mentioned in my letter accompanying the final report, this suggests that a SH application would be considered favourably.

After the Course

Please feel you can contact me about anything connected with Britain. For example, parents ask for my advice on continuing their children's education in Britain. I am happy to help. No charge! I see this as a natural extension of my work with young people. Students ask for information, sometimes ten or twenty years later or more.

Vacational Studies Trade Mark

Our logo and the words Vacational Studies have been registered as trade marks. We have no connection with any other organisation – whether with a similar or dissimilar name.



The Jörg Weise Association (JWA)

This exists to encourage international understanding. Every year, we have students who make an exceptional contribution to the international aims of the Course or who are internationally-minded. These may like to consider joining the Association. Details are at www.vacstuds.com/JWA.

Giotto

This enables our students to keep in touch with friends from when they were students with us and to make new contacts for social or professional purposes. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/GIOTTO.

Vacational Studies Foundation

The Vacational Studies Foundation was registered as a Charity under English Law in January 2000 to assist talented young people. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/FOUNDATION.

H.T.W. Mucklejohn

My father, who was Company Secretary from the founding of Vacational Studies until his death in 2003, was a great support to me. In his memory, the Jörg Weise Association has donated in perpetuity a full Scholarship which I am able to award when I come across a young person who would benefit from our Courses, but cannot apply for financial reasons. If you know one, tell me.

VacStuds on Facebook

is for those connected with Vacational Studies to continue to relate to us and to each other.

VacStuds on Twitter

exists because it can exist, but I have yet to convinced of its worth.

Vacstuds.com in a virtual world

Vacstuds.com is our 'shopwindow' and main medium of communication. All our 'literature' is there. There is no point in our printing anything on paper, especially as information can be updated in seconds. We expect all parents to have internet access and to check the 'Latest News' section at vacstuds.com for the latest news and links to the information we produce. We occasionally send e-mails to everyone and ask that vacstuds.com is included as an allowed address so that messages from us are not seen as spam.

My thanks

...to all those who trusted with the care of their children this summer. I am privileged that, since 1973, I been able to help shape the lives of thousands of young people all over the world.

and finally...

For those who are interested, my second book about my adventures ('And Then There Were Three - Expanded Edition' (ISBN 1903933730)) was published in June 2006 and is available inter alia via www.amazon.com. I have put the entire text on www.andthentherewerethree.co.uk. The third book is scheduled to appear in February 2011.

and even more finally

We look forward to the 2011 Courses. As many of you will know, we have had decades of teaching English as a foreign language and running schools for this: Cheam School, Douai School, Elstree School, Hawtreys School and Mary Hare School, some of which have been in action for 25 years or more. This year, to make our Courses more interesting, we are going to run all our Schools at one location, but to retain tradition we shall divide our pupils among Houses having the same names: Cheam House, Douai House, Elstree House, Hawtreys House and Mary Hare House. These can be selected on the application form (though you will not be able to book at present for Elstree House). The division into Houses is for the purposes of competition, but everyone can meet everyone else.

Biographical note

Ian Mucklejohn - who, as the Director, co-ordinates the Schools - was born in London. He is a graduate of the University of London with an Honours Degree in English Language and Literature, is an Associate of the College of Preceptors and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He has had many years experience in teaching. He is a published writer. He is the founder of Vacational Studies and has three ten year-old sons of his own.



Vacational Studies

Pepys' Oak, Tydehams, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 6JT, England

Telephone

National 01635 523333
International +44 1635 523333

Telephone (mobile)

National 07717 007007
International +44 7717 007007

Fax

National 01635 523999
International +44 1635 523999

E-Mail

vacstuds@vacstuds.com

Web Site

<http://www.vacstuds.com>

Skype

vacstuds



© Vacational Studies MMX

Printed in England on non-bleached paper from farmed sources.

Photographs by IGM and Jon Ireland.

Designed by Greenfisher.

Written by IGM.

The words 'Vacational Studies' and the logo are registered trade marks.

Cheam, Elstree, Hawtreys, Douai, Mary Hare, VacStuds, Cheam House, Elstree House, Hawtreys House, Douai House, Mary Hare House are trade marks of VSI Vacational Studies (International) Limited for educational services for the teaching of English as a foreign language and schools for the same.

Vacational Studies® is a Registered Trade Mark of VSI Vacational Studies (International) Limited.

"The best 4 weeks of my life. Looking forward to 2011"

**Vacational
Studies®**

www.vacstuds.com

Accredited by the
**BRITISH
COUNCIL**

ENGLISHUK
member