



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

MONITORING VISIT

CHERWELL COLLEGE OXFORD

Full Name	Cherwell College Oxford
Address	Cantay House, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1JD
Telephone Number	01865 242670
Email Address	director@cherwell-college-oxford.co.uk
Website	www.cherwell-college.co.uk
Principal	Mr Stephen Clarke
Proprietors	Mr Stephen Clarke Ms Helen Puzikova
Age Range	15+
Total number of students	11
Numbers by age and type of study	Under 18: 6 18+: 5 FE only: 11
Inspection date	1 April 2014

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight Monitoring Visits and Extended Monitoring Visits of private further education colleges and English language schools. The focus of the visit is to confirm that the quality standards reported at the last full inspection are being maintained.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through Tier 4 of the points-based system for student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

A monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the Standards for Educational Oversight. Inspectors will make judgements on progress against any action points and recommendations made at that time. The inspection will not examine all other Standards in detail but will sample to confirm that previous Standards have been maintained and that there are no contrary indicators to those quality judgements.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Cherwell College Oxford is a co-educational tutorial college located at two sites in the centre of Oxford. It was originally established in 1972. It is a limited company and was taken over by the present owners and managers in October 2011. The two directors are also senior managers; one is the principal. There is no governing body.
- 1.2 The college specialises in preparing international and UK students for university entrance. Its aim is to help 15 to 20 year olds to achieve the highest qualifications in traditional subjects through a bespoke comprehensive academic programme, enabling entry to leading universities in the UK and the rest of the world. The college offers one and two-year GCSE, A level and Cambridge Pre-University courses, with a large number of subjects available to choose from. In addition, it offers short-term revision courses focusing on preparation for examinations. International students also take International English Language Testing System (IELTS) courses. The main methods of teaching are through individual tuition and small group seminars.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 11 students enrolled; 7 are studying on Tier 4 visas and the remaining students are from the UK and European Union (EU). There was one student aged 15 years and one in his early 30s, with the remainder aged 16 to 19. All but three students have English as an additional language, but their English language skills are very good. The college has its own residential accommodation, with students aged under 16 living in homestay accommodation. Selection for courses is based on an interview and an analysis of previous results including English language tests, previous school reports and results from an English language and subject specific tests administered by the college or their agents. One student has been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 This visit was conducted at short notice. The college was last inspected on 14 May 2013 and was awarded the grade of meets expectations. The recommendations from the previous report are:
 - Ensure that all tutors receive safeguarding training at induction and this training is extended to all present members of staff.
 - Gather regular and formal feedback from staff and students as part of the quality assurance cycle.
 - Ensure that grades from lesson observations are used to further improve the quality of teaching.
 - Implement the appraisal system for all staff.
 - Include the name of the principal and details of examination results on the college website.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college meets expectations.** At the previous inspection of 14 May 2013 the college was found to meet expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Course provision closely reflects the college's aim to prepare students for higher education, and courses meet students' needs very well. Teaching is excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan effective lessons which thoroughly involve and motivate students. As a result, students learn well and make excellent progress. External examination results are very good and have been significantly above national average results for the last two years.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is satisfactory. Health and safety are well managed, with regular checks and risk assessments undertaken. The premises are well maintained. The college and its residential accommodation are safe and secure. Admission and attendance records are accurate and attendance monitoring is very good, resulting in good levels of student attendance. Pastoral and personal support is good, including guidance on higher education and careers. Students have very good access to staff and know who to go to if they have a concern. Safeguarding is satisfactory overall. Good progress has been made in ensuring that all staff receive safeguarding training. However, the safeguarding policy is incomplete and is not consistently implemented. There is insufficient guidance on what action must be taken in the event of a student disclosure, or if there are concerns about inappropriate behaviour of staff. The policy is clear on the need to check the suitability of staff for working with children and young people, but procedures for making and recording these checks are insufficiently robust. Residential arrangements are well managed and the college's own student houses are well maintained and appropriate for the age group of students accommodated.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. The proprietors are fully involved in all operational and strategic issues. Communication and relationships between staff and managers are good and all staff understand the educational direction of the college. Academic management is strong and, as a result, the quality of students' education is very good. Some aspects of management and leadership are less effective. A minority of policies are out-of-date and not fully implemented. The staff recruitment policy is not applied rigorously; evidence of checks being made and recorded on the suitability of staff for employment is inconsistent. Quality assurance is unsystematic. Information on the college's performance is collected, but it is not analysed or reported on or used formally to identify priorities for improvement. Good progress has been made against all of the recommendations from the previous inspection, including the development and early implementation of effective systems for lesson observations and appraisals.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 3.2 The curriculum is very well organised and highly effective in meeting the needs of the college's students. Course provision is accurately described on the website and prospectus and closely reflects the aim of the college to prepare students for entry to higher education. GCSE and A level courses are supplemented with study skills and, where necessary, English language lessons. Courses lead to qualifications which meet Home Office requirements for students on Tier 4 visas.
- 3.3 Teaching is excellent. Teachers are extremely enthusiastic and have extensive subject knowledge. Most of the teaching is one-to-one and teachers are experienced in planning such lessons so that students remain interested, attentive and motivated. They use highly effective teaching and learning methods to deliver lessons which involve students actively in learning. Lessons challenge students to learn at appropriate levels, and teachers regularly test their understanding. As a result, students make excellent progress.
- 3.4 Effective processes are in place to monitor students' progress. Students are assessed and reported on regularly, with individual progress and achievement systematically recorded and effectively analysed to ensure they are making appropriate progress towards their learning goals. Students are highly satisfied with their course and with the progress they make.
- 3.5 Students are well informed about the progress they are making, and clear individual targets are set. Grade targets are discussed in lessons and in discussions about progression to higher education. These are not recorded systematically and individual learning plans are not fully developed, limiting the impact of target setting.
- 3.6 Student achievement is very good. External examination results for the last two years are high, with average grades in GCSEs and A Levels significantly higher than national averages.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is satisfactory. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 The recommendation in this area from the previous inspection report is:
- Ensure that all tutors receive safeguarding training at induction and this training is extended to all present members of staff.
- 4.3 Good progress has been made against this recommendation. All staff are required to undertake an online safeguarding course prior to or immediately after their appointment, and five senior and administration staff have completed interagency training.
- 4.4 Arrangements for health and safety are comprehensive and well managed across the college and residential accommodation. Policies and procedures are clear and implemented consistently. Fire and emergency procedures are effective, and health and safety issues are monitored closely through regular checks and risk assessments, including risk assessments for off-site student activities. Sufficient staff have undertaken fire marshal and first aid training. Students know where to go if there is an accident or if someone is ill, but they are not aware of which staff are first aiders. This information is not included in the student handbook or displayed in the college.
- 4.5 There are good quality and well-maintained premises for teaching and administration, with light and well-ventilated rooms. Security arrangements are good. As a result, the college provides a safe and comfortable place for students to study. Students confirm that they feel safe in the college and in their residential accommodation.
- 4.6 Student registration and attendance records are accurate and very well managed. Attendance monitoring is good and students understand the need for good attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance rates are good. Secure procedures are in place for reporting to the Home Office on the attendance of Tier 4 students.
- 4.7 Staff provide effective pastoral and personal support to students. A system is in place to ensure students receive support on personal issues, which is explained clearly during the induction process. Students have access to a good range of social and cultural opportunities within Oxford. There is a planned programme of activities, including social activities aimed at enhancing learning.
- 4.8 Students have access to higher education and careers advice and guidance to enable them to make informed decisions about their futures. They confirm that they receive in-depth support concerning university choices and application.
- 4.9 Safeguarding is satisfactory; it has been strengthened recently through additional training and a policy review. Certain features of the safeguarding provision are not implemented consistently. The safeguarding policy is incomplete; at the start of the

inspection it did not identify the names and titles of the designated safeguarding officers. This was rectified during inspection. The policy covers the key principles of safeguarding well. However, it is insufficiently precise about actions to be taken in the event of a student disclosing significant harm or where concerns about a member of staff are raised. Nor does it address liaison with children's services and the local authority and reporting to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

- 4.10 Residential accommodation is good in the two student houses. Facilities are appropriate, including well-maintained toilets and showers, bedroom space and study areas. Catering and supervision arrangements are satisfactory and the necessary levels of security are provided. The college has achieved a good balance between enabling students to achieve a degree of independence in this accommodation whilst providing support when required. Established homestay arrangements are provided for younger students and these are registered with, and inspected by, the local authority.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 5.2 The recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report are:
- Gather regular and formal feedback from staff and students as part of the quality assurance cycle.
 - Ensure that grades from lesson observations are used to further improve the quality of teaching.
 - Implement the appraisal system for all staff.
 - Include the name of the principal and details of examination results on the college website.
- 5.3 Good progress has been made against the first recommendation. Regular progress review surgeries have been introduced with individual students. These provide opportunities for students to receive feedback on their overall progress, and also for students to comment on teachers, their progress, and college support and facilities. Students in college residences are also provided with opportunities to give feedback on the support they receive and on the quality of accommodation. This feedback is used to identify actions for improvement, but it is not analysed and reported on systematically.
- 5.4 Good progress has been made against the second and third recommendations. A new staff appraisal system has been developed. This is thorough and has a strong focus on identifying targets for improvement. Many staff have been appointed recently, so this has not yet been fully implemented. The system includes a clear link to the outcomes of lesson observations and encourages professional development activities where appropriate. Lesson observations are undertaken at least annually for all teachers, and within the first few weeks of a new teacher's appointment. Observations result in detailed written feedback and descriptive grades. Teachers value the feedback and support offered by observations, although the feedback on a minority of observations identifies few clear targets for improvements.
- 5.5 Good progress has also been made against the fourth recommendation. The website is detailed and provides accurate and realistic information. It now includes the name and contact details of the principal and an analysis of the 2013 examination results.
- 5.6 The two proprietors are also senior managers and are fully involved in all strategic and operational matters. The educational direction of the college is clear and is well understood by all staff. Policies and procedures have all been reviewed recently, but at the time of inspection there were inconsistencies between policies published on the website and those in use in the college. In some policies staff named in key positions had left the college some months earlier.

- 5.7 Communication between managers and directors, and between managers and staff, is effective. Staff have opportunities to give feedback to managers and they confirm that managers are responsive to their feedback. Leadership and management provide good and improving levels of staffing and academic management is strong, resulting in very good course provision for students.
- 5.8 Leadership is less effective in implementing systems for monitoring the college's performance, and for ensuring that all aspects of its staff recruitment procedures are applied. The approach to quality assurance is not systematic. Evidence concerning the college's performance is available from students' feedback, progress testing and examination results. This is not reported at management meetings and not used formally in the identification of priorities for improvement and action planning.
- 5.9 The college's safe recruitment policy is clear and fully reflects safeguarding requirements. However, it is not fully implemented. The college is not able to consistently demonstrate that all appropriate checks for staff have been carried out, and information is not always added to staff records as soon as it is received. The system for checking and recording the suitability of staff to work with students under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults is not sufficiently robust. At the time of the inspection a central record of all DBS checks was not available. Sufficient personal references are not always obtained where questions about suitability to work with children have not been answered.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the satisfactory quality provided, the college should:

- Develop individual learning plans to ensure that progress reports and students' targets are recorded and shared.
- Review and strengthen the safeguarding policy to ensure that there is clear guidance on how to respond to incidents within the college and to liaise with external agencies when appropriate.
- Ensure that the college's staff recruitment policy is fully implemented through the systematic recording of all suitability checks, and the monitoring of these records to identify where DBS checks need to be updated.
- Ensure that all published policies are current, accurately identify the responsible staff members, and are fully implemented.
- Develop a systematic approach to recording and monitoring evidence of the college's performance and use it in identifying priorities for improvement.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with students. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietors, and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mr Neil Haynes	Lead Inspector
Dr Nigel Chambers	Team Inspector
Mr Martin Ayres	Team Inspector