



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Additional Inspection Report

Cherwell College Oxford

February 2023

School's details

School name	Cherwell College Oxford			
DfE number	931/6016			
Address	Cherwell College Oxford St George's Mansion 1–3 George Street Oxford Oxfordshire OX1 2AR			
Telephone number	01865 242670			
Email address	secretary@cherwell-college.co.uk			
Principal	Mr Stephen Clarke			
Chair of Proprietors	Mr Stephen Clarke			
Proprietor	Oxbridge Colleges Ltd			
Age Range	12 to 25			
Number of pupils on roll	63			
	Day pupils	35	Boarders	28
	Seniors	12	Sixth Form	51
Date of inspection	7 February 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Cherwell College is a co-educational school located in central Oxford. The proprietor is Oxbridge Colleges Limited of which the principal, vice principal and the finance manager are officers. Boarding accommodation, and science and music facilities are in separate buildings a few minutes' walk away. The school has 22 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are 14 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and 25 pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in October 2021.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 14	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 8]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. The policy was updated on the website during the inspection to reflect the current practice, which was in line with statutory guidance.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standards.
- 2.4 Implementation of all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support for the needs of pupils, including those with SEND and with EHC plans.
- 2.5 The safeguarding team, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs, fulfils additional responsibilities required across the school, including in the boarding house. They and all other staff and tutors are suitably trained in accordance with statutory and local guidance. The school has an appropriate code of conduct for staff. Staff who spoke to the inspectors understood this and their safeguarding responsibilities and procedures. Any arrangement for staff to transport pupils ensures the pupils' wellbeing. Staff know how to contact the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO) and other agencies should they have any concerns. They know to go direct to the LADO with any concerns about senior leaders, who are also the proprietors. They have a suitable knowledge of thresholds for reporting any concerns about pupils and the safeguarding policy provides contact details for local agencies. The DSL has an effective relationship with children's services and with the LADO. The senior wellbeing team monitor and support pupils' welfare effectively, doing so in association with external agencies where applicable.
- 2.6 Pupils in school buildings, including in the boarding house, are effectively safeguarded by suitable security systems and appropriate supervision, including at night in boarding. Any visitors are required to sign in and are accompanied at all times. Anyone visiting or working in the boarding house or school unsupervised has all the appropriate recruitment checks undertaken. These include a disclosure and barring service (DBS) check or equivalent for their own country. Where family members live adjacent to boarding accommodation access is not possible to or from boarding areas.
- 2.7 Records seen relating to safeguarding are comprehensive and indicate that the school deals appropriately with issues in order to support and safeguard pupils' welfare. Pupils and records confirmed that staff, including senior leaders and proprietors, listen to the views of the pupils effectively. The safeguarding team act immediately on any early signs of risk and monitors pupils' wellbeing appropriately through various systems which are shared with staff and tutors. The use of alcohol is suitably controlled and any consumption is appropriate to the ages of pupils.
- 2.8 Pupils spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they receive guidance on how to respond to issues if they arise. They learn effectively how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils confirm that they feel listened to by the school, as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 9]

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.

- 2.10 The school makes effective risk assessments for buildings and for all activities on school premises. Appropriate assessments are also made for vulnerable pupils and those who require additional support and care. The risk assessments, including those for boarding, are clear and include approaches to be taken to identify and mitigate risks. There are also assessments of risk for older pupils who may study in Oxford University buildings or the local library.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19]

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 All required checks on staff and members of the proprietorial body are carried out and completed before they take up their position. A register is kept as required. Any adult having short-term supervised access to areas of the school, including boarding, has comprehensive recruitment checks undertaken. All visitors to boarding are supervised appropriately.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.13 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 14]

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. The school's procedures provide for a person independent of the governance or management of the school to be part of the panel for any stage 3 hearing. Records of formal complaints are clear and comprehensive and are kept appropriately. They indicate where a complaint involves boarding.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 2]

- 2.16 The school meets the standards.
- 2.17 The proprietor and senior leaders manage safeguarding and welfare arrangements effectively and monitor compliance with the standards and other statutory advice. They implement suitable policies, practices and procedures to enable this. The leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are consistently met and the pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the principal, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the proprietor. They visited different areas of the school, the boarding house and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Miss Sue Duff

Reporting inspector

Dr Pamela Edmonds

Assistant reporting inspector