



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

EXTENDED MONITORING VISIT

CHERWELL COLLEGE OXFORD

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| Full Name | Cherwell College Oxford |
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| Email Address | director@cherwell-college-oxford.co.uk |
| Website | www.cherwell-college.co.uk |
| Principal | Mr Stephen Clarke |
| Proprietor | Mr Stephen Clarke Ms Helen Puzikova |
| Age Range | 15+ |
| Total number of students | 30 |
| Numbers by age and type of study | Under 16: 3 16-18: 12 18+: 15 FE only: 17 EFL and FE: 13 |
| Inspection date | 10 March 2015 |

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.

An extended monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the quality 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. Inspectors will also consider the impact of any material change reported since the last inspection.

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| 1 CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT | 2 |
| 2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS | 4 |
| 3 THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS | 5 |
| 4 STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY | 6 |
| 5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT | 8 |
| 6 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 10 |
| INSPECTION EVIDENCE | 11 |

1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Cherwell College Oxford is a private co-educational tutorial college. Founded in 1972 the college is located at four sites in central Oxford. Ownership of the college as a limited company transferred to the present owners in 2011. The two directors are senior managers of the college, one is the principal. The college has no governing body.
- 1.2 The college offers courses to prepare international and UK students for entry to university. The aim is to help students aged 15 to 20 year olds to achieve the highest qualifications in traditional subjects through a comprehensive bespoke academic programme enabling entry to leading universities in the UK and the rest of the world. The college offers a wide range of subjects through one and two year courses at GCSE, A level and Cambridge Pre-University Courses. International English Language Testing System (IELTS) courses are available for students from other countries. The majority of courses are delivered through personal tutorial and small group teaching
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 30 students were enrolled; 14 are studying on Tier 4 visas and the remainder are from the UK and European Union (EU). There are 3 students under 16 years, 12 aged 16 to 18 and 15 who are over 18. The majority of students have English as an additional language but their English language skills are very good. The college has its own new hall of residence which accommodates all of its students. Selection for courses is by interview and previous academic performance. The college also uses its own subject tests and English language tests to confirm prior test results. The college reports three students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 This monitoring visit has been extended due to acquisition of a new building. For this reason, Section 4 of the Educational Oversight Framework will be looked at in detail.
- 1.5 The recommendations from the previous report are:
 - 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 colleges' 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 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.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college meets expectations.** At the previous inspection of 1 April 2014 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. The courses accurately meet the college's aims to prepare students for entry to university. Teaching is excellent; teachers are enthusiastic for their subjects and prepare effective lessons which interest and stimulate. Students are encouraged to develop skills of independent learning and take responsibility for the management of their own progress. Satisfactory progress has been made in the development of individualised learning plans (ILP's) but lack integration of the separate subject monitoring systems and personal tutorials to support students across their whole programme of study. The students make good progress and achieve good outcomes in their final examinations with results above national averages
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. Clear policies are implemented to minimise risk from fire and other hazards. Premises are well maintained and are fit for purpose. Records of registration and attendance are accurate and well managed. Students studying under Tier 4 visas are informed of Home Office requirements for enrolment and attendance and effective procedures are in place for reporting. Safeguarding is good; there are effective policies to safeguard students under-18. Staff are DBS checked and details of all checks made prior to appointment are recorded on file and on a central register. All staff receive safeguarding training and students and staff are informed about the policies and actions to take in the event of an incident. Support for students is good and staff provide up to date guidance on careers and academic matters as well as support on personal matters. The recent development of new purpose built hall of residence has improved provision enabling all college students to be accommodated on one site in a safe environment with wardens who provide support on personal matters and also supervise private study.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. College leadership provides good educational direction which is reflected in the quality of education, care of students and in addressing the college's aims. The proprietors are fully involved in strategic and operational matters. Management roles are clear and communication between managers and staff is good. Academic management is good resulting in high quality of education but other areas of management are less effective. Quality assurance in the curriculum is good but the reporting of data to monitor other aspects of the college's performance is not systematic or coherent. Consequently targets and priorities for improvement lack clarity and do not provide a focus for the further development of the college. Good progress has been made both in improvement of the college's policies and in staff recruitment procedures ensuring that appropriate checks are made prior to appointment and systematic records are maintained.

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 recommendation in this area from the previous inspection report is:
- Develop individual learning plans to ensure that progress reports and students' targets are recorded and shared.
- 3.3 The college has made satisfactory progress in meeting the first recommendation. Individualised learning plans (ILP's) are being formalised to integrate the current separate student monitoring systems. Subject monitoring and reporting carried out by teachers are regular and excellent but they lack personal tutorials to monitor and support students throughout their entire programme.
- 3.4 The curriculum is well planned and effectively managed in meeting student needs. The course provision is accurately described on the website and effectively illustrates the college's aim to prepare students for entry to university. Initial assessment, advice and guidance are effective in placing students on the most appropriate course to meet their aspirations. Guided supervised study sessions are timetabled to support A-level and GCSE courses. Students learn well and make good progress. Courses lead to qualifications which meet Home Office requirements.
- 3.5 Teaching is excellent. Teachers are well qualified, experienced and have good subject knowledge. The great majority of teaching is by one-to-one tutorial with some small group sessions. Teachers are enthusiastic and ensure that the lessons are motivating and fully engage the learners. The lessons are well planned to promote active involvement, to challenge and to develop skills of independent learning. Lesson planning takes into account students aptitudes and prior attainments. Classroom resources are appropriate and are used effectively. Work is assessed frequently to test student's knowledge and understanding and good feedback is provided. There is thorough preparation for final examinations by regular practice tests.
- 3.6 Robust procedures are in place to monitor progress. Good records are maintained of student progress and are used well to track performance. Students are informed of their progress in individual subjects but the opportunities for taking responsibility for the management of their own performance are limited by the absence of a comprehensively developed ILP to incorporate all of their studies.
- 3.7 Student achievement is good. The results in external examinations are higher than the national average grades in A-level and GCSE.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 The recommendation in this area from the previous inspection report is:
- 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.
- 4.3 The college has made good progress towards meeting this recommendation. There is a robust and comprehensive safeguarding policy details of which are effectively communicated to all staff and students through induction, staff and student handbooks and the college website. There is clear guidance on how to respond to incidents within the college and liaison with external agencies when appropriate. This is supplemented by a separate, thorough E-safety policy which includes clear specifications and guidance for use of ICT systems and devices at the college. All staff have received effective safeguarding training at levels appropriate to their roles. All newly appointed staff are required to undertake the training and provision is made for updating.
- 4.4 The college has demonstrated proper regard for health and safety including first aid and fire safety. Appropriate policies are in place and there are effective arrangements to ensure the safety of staff and students at all college premises. There are qualified first aiders and fire marshals for each of the college sites. Testing of equipment and evacuation drills take place regularly and accurate records are maintained of tests, drills, equipment and accidents. Detailed risk assessments are carried out for activities on site, for visits arranged by the college and external events and comprehensive records are maintained.
- 4.5 All college premises are fit for purpose and are well maintained; there are adequate security arrangements and there is controlled access to all buildings. There are sufficient washrooms and most buildings have facilities for people with disabilities. Where food is prepared and served there are good arrangements to ensure hygienic preparation and service. All buildings are in good decorative order and are well maintained. Heating, lighting, ventilation and sound insulation are good in all buildings. Teaching and administrative rooms are well equipped; furniture and fittings meet the age and needs of the students.
- 4.6 The college maintains accurate admissions registers and records of student attendance. Attendance monitoring is good and students appreciate the need for punctuality and good attendance. Effective arrangements are in place for reporting to the Home Office where a student fails to enrol or does not meet attendance requirements.
- 4.7 Pastoral and personal support for students is good. There are appropriate systems in place to provide support on personal and academic matters. All students follow

an effective induction programme which prepares them for their studies and introduces the requirements of the college. The college has a good programme of social activities which includes a range of visits, cultural activities and enrichment in preparation for progression to university. Students have access to sporting and leisure facilities at Oxford University and are members of the Oxford Union. The college provides good careers advice and thorough preparation for life as a university student.

- 4.8 The college has developed new high quality residential accommodation. This meets the requirements of all current students. All staff working at the residence are recent appointments and are DBS checked. The new accommodation has improved the provision which the college makes for students and ensures high safety standards.
- 4.9 Good support on personal issues is readily available from the wardens and reflects the college's commitment to the high standards of care for its students by the E-safety policy.
- 4.10 Monitoring of students when in residence is effective. Student attendance in the hall of residence is recorded and leave is only with prior parental approval.
- 4.11 The accommodation is registered in accordance with national requirements.

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:
- Ensure that the colleges' 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 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.
- 5.3 The college has made good progress in meeting the first recommendation. The staff recruitment policy is well documented and identifies all of the checks which are made to determine staff suitability. Records of all checks made are kept on staff files both in hard copy and electronically. Records are current and complete and show when DBS checks need to be updated.
- 5.4 Progress against the second recommendation is good. There is an effective procedure for the development, approval, communication, implementation and monitoring of policies which identifies the responsible staff and period of review.
- 5.5 Satisfactory progress has been made in meeting the third recommendation. A limited range of information is available on which management decisions are based. The college does not have a coherent strategy for regular reporting and monitoring performance which can be used to identify priorities for improvement.
- 5.6 College leadership provides good educational direction which is reflected in the quality of education, care of students and addressing the college's aims. Effective oversight is provided by the operational roles of the proprietors. Management roles are clear and staff are fully aware of their responsibilities; there is a good relationship between staff and senior management. Academic management is good and results in high quality of education for students. Communication is effective; there are regular staff meetings and staff are well informed through email of changes to timetable or information about college events but some areas of college management are weak. There is limited staff participation in the preparation of the self-evaluation report identifying strengths or areas for development and setting priorities for improvement. Staff have little involvement in the college development plan which provides an effective narrative for the college's future activities but insufficient criteria for measurement of success and setting targets.

- 5.7 The proprietors are successful in appointing and supporting well qualified and experienced staff and confirming their suitability to work with students under 18.
- 5.8 There are clear mechanisms in place for quality assurance within the curriculum which support the college in maintaining its high standards but these do not apply to other areas of the college's activities.
- 5.9 Performance management is good. There are opportunities for appraisal of all staff which include observations of teaching and learning which are linked to staff development opportunities.
- 5.10 The proprietor has ensured that appropriate policies are communicated well through the college's website. The policies make a positive statement which clearly reflects the college's approach and course of action in a specific field. The college has a safe recruitment policy which is effective in ensuring the suitability of prospective staff to work with students under-18. A central record of staff showing all checks made is maintained in addition to the information held on staff files.
- 5.11 The college has an effective complaints policy which meets requirements.
- 5.12 Detailed information on the college website is accurate and expresses the aims and purpose of the college well. This enables prospective students to make an informed choice of place for study.
- 5.13 The college provided all information requested by the inspectors in a timely manner.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Implement ILP's fully to build on the effective initial assessment and integrate separate subject monitoring systems through personal tutorials.
- Engage staff fully in the development of the self-evaluation report and the college development plan.
- Make more effective use of the self-evaluation report to monitor the college's performance and identify priorities for improvement.
- Develop and implement a coherent and systematic quality management strategy to set criteria used to identify clear targets for improvement and to measure success.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

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| Mr Peter Wood | Lead Inspector |
| Ms Sharon Weston | Team Inspector |