

Ashbourne Independent College

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	207/6348
Unique Reference Number (URN)	100537
Inspection number	361319
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2010



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Ashbourne Independent College was founded in 1981 as a co-educational tutorial establishment specialising in pre-university education. The college now offers conventional two-year A-level and GCSE courses in small groups. A small number of students of compulsory school age follow pre-GCSE courses. The college serves both home-based and international students. There are currently 162 students on roll, aged from 13 to 20. Entry is through examination. There are no students who have a statement of special educational needs. The college supports students who are learning English as an additional language. The college is a member of the Council for Independent Further Education (CIFE). It is located on two nearby sites in west London. The college was last inspected in 2007, when it met many of the regulations for registration. The college aims to promote high academic standards and develop students' independent approach to study by engendering a positive ethos in which every student is expected to strive to achieve his or her potential.

Evaluation of the school

Ashbourne Independent College provides an outstanding quality of education and meets its aims effectively. As a result of an outstanding curriculum and outstanding teaching the students make outstanding progress. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their behaviour. The college has robust procedures for safeguarding. The college has improved since the last inspection and now meets all but one of the regulations for registration. Much of this success is due to the dynamic leadership of the Director of Studies.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of the students very effectively. They can choose from a very wide range of subjects: 16 at GCSE and 32 at AS and A2 level. Every effort is made to ensure that students can study the combination of subjects that they wish. The youngest students are taught an appropriate range of subjects. Students up to the age of 16 now have two hours of physical education weekly at off-site locations. This was a requirement following the last inspection. Throughout the curriculum, the focus for students is on encouraging active learning and enjoyment and in giving them as varied, innovative and exciting an education as

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

possible. Students have two-hour lessons, with a short half-time break, within a total of 40 periods each week, and some older students work until 6pm. The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme for younger students is comprehensive. Older students have a double tutorial period with their personal tutor each week, which covers a range of pastoral and academic issues. Students confirm that these sessions are very useful indeed. There are around 25% of the students in the college for whom English is not their first language. They have up to six weekly lessons in English for speakers of other languages and very good support within lessons. Most students make rapid progress, partly as a result of their tuition, and also because of the friendly way the students mix and chat to each other. English is used as the language of communication. Students are very well supported with careers advice. Year 10, students onwards have the opportunity for work experience. The vast majority of students move on to higher or further education. They report that they are very well supported in their university or college applications with help in choosing the correct course.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of clubs, some run by students, which include chess, book group, sports and drama. A number of visits to museums, galleries and theatres further extend the curriculum, and visitors to the college include representatives from universities and industry.

The teaching and assessment are outstanding. The very well informed specialist staff prepare their lessons thoroughly, teach with enthusiasm and energy and effectively convey their love of their subject to the students. Most lessons move at a brisk pace, students are kept on task and are given interesting and challenging work and many opportunities for independent and investigative learning. Very effective use is made of information and communication technology, which has improved vastly since the last inspection. This ranges from students using their own devices as a working tool to staff using video clips very effectively to illustrate teaching points. Staff are very good at targeting questions to ensure that students have clearly understood the lesson. Very effective use is made of cross-curricular links. For example, students discussed art and history linked to an English lesson about bullfighting. The older students appreciate the way they are treated as young adults, with some discussion led by staff but much initiated by students. Their opinions are considered and reflected upon, as, for example, in a philosophy lesson in a discussion on 'design argument'. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect in lessons and relationships are very positive at all levels. Students are enthusiastic about the college with one commenting: 'teaching is amazing...they make it all really interesting and we are treated as young adults.'

Assessment of the students' learning during lessons is very well developed. Some staff identify the students' abilities and areas for development in their lesson plans, demonstrating the depth of knowledge they have on students' prior attainment. Students' work is marked well and staff give constructive comments which help students improve their work. Individual supportive tutorials are provided for older students. Each half term the college has 'mini mock week', which helps to prepare students for their examinations. Students are set targets based on their results,

which are carefully monitored. Often students are also asked to devise their own targets, which are subject to ongoing review, with the purpose of keeping them focused between their examinations. Consequently, students make outstanding progress. They know the progress they are making and confirm that the staff give them very good guidance in their work. The GCSE and A-level examination results for the last two years have been significantly above the national average. The college has identified in its self-evaluation that the testing of younger students on entry needs review. The five written reports each year give parents a considerable amount of information but some of this is repetitive. The reports give effort and attainment grades but sometimes lack sufficient details about what the student has learnt, what specific progress has been made or what the student needs to do next to improve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students

The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop self-awareness and confidence. The college ethos promotes in the students a strong sense of mutual self-respect and trust. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere and new students report that they are made to feel very welcome and everyone is very open and relaxed. The extensive PSHCE programme contains elements of religious education to reflect the range of faiths and backgrounds of the many international students. This programme contributes substantially to the spiritual and moral development of younger students. Staff are excellent role models and give students a sense of responsibility by treating them as young adults. In response students are respectful, their behaviour is outstanding and they are maturing into sensible young adults ready for the next stage of their education. Through discussion in both lessons and individual tutorial time students develop their own thinking on ethical and moral issues. Attendance is very good, students have a very positive attitude to learning and their economic well-being is promoted effectively.

Students' social development is outstanding. Relationships between students are very harmonious and are characterised by a genuine sense of interest in and tolerance for each other. Older students willingly support and care for each other, help to support younger students in organising clubs and take part in helping in their activities, such as in drama. They are preparing for the end-of-year 'Ashbourne Revue' which involves music, drama and a fashion show. Students' knowledge and understanding of their own and the culture of others are remarkable. Racial harmony is promoted very effectively. Students confirm that one of the strengths of the college is the opportunity it gives them to mix with fellow students from around the world. This understanding of others is strengthened through the cultural differences they share and through the inclusive nature of the college. Visits to theatres, galleries and museums add significantly to their knowledge of English services and institutions and to their aesthetic experience overall.

Welfare, health and safety of students

Arrangements to provide for the welfare, health and safety of the students are good. The college has devised and implemented effectively a range of good policies, which include anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside the college and behaviour. These help to minimise the health and safety risks to the students and detailed risk assessments are carried out on all activities. The policy for safeguarding meets the regulations and all staff are trained in safeguarding, with several trained to a higher level. The college was required to update this training following the last inspection. Precautions to prevent fire are good, with a detailed fire risk assessment, regular documented fire drills and all fire appliances maintained under an annual contract. There are several trained first aiders on both sites and an appropriate first aid policy. Students are encouraged to eat healthily and to take exercise, and older students are encouraged to participate in sports clubs. Admission and attendance registers are kept according to the regulations. The college has devised and implemented a three-year accessibility plan for both buildings to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The college checks the suitability of all staff to work with students and the information is held on the required single central register of staff appointments. Following the last inspection the college was required to ensure that all necessary staff checks had been completed, and this is now done very thoroughly.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The premises are warm, welcoming and enable safe and effective learning. The college is accommodated in two buildings a very short distance apart, adjacent to Kensington High Street. The younger students are very well supervised when they move from one building to the next. Older students appreciate the sense of autonomy they are given and even in very bad weather made a valiant attempt to get to college on time. The premises are well maintained and decorated. However, there is no available space for a medical room with running hot and cold water. If students are unwell they are made comfortable in the common room until they can go home. The college has no outdoor area but good use is made of local parks and leisure centres for recreational purposes. This was a requirement following the last inspection.

Provision of information

Parents, carers and others are given a very good range of clear, accurate, up-to-date information through the prospectus, informative website and newsletters. Following the last inspection the college was required to ensure that parents had all the necessary information, and this provision is now in place. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are very supportive of the college with one

commenting, 'my child loves this school, it is open minded, caring and helps young people to move forward in a very positive, successful way.'

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The college has a set of procedures which fully meet the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- devise effective procedures to test younger students' attainment on entry
- reduce the number of reports and include more detail about what the student has learnt, the progress they have made and what they need to do next to improve.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Secondary Tutorial College		
Date school opened	1981		
Age range of pupils	13–20		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 73	Girls: 89	Total: 162
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,000–£19,800		
Address of school	17 Old Court Place, London, W8 4PL		
Telephone number	020 7937 3858		
Email address	john@ashbournecollege.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mike Kirby		
Proprietor	Mike Kirby		