

# Bellerbys College

Independent school standard inspection report

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## 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>3</sup>

## Information about the school

Bellerbys College in Greenwich is one of four colleges of this name in the UK, and is owned by StudyGroup, which owns English as a foreign language schools and international colleges in the UK, Australia and the USA. This college was established in 1997 and moved to its current premises in 2004. Also on the site is Embassy CES, offering language training. Since the last education inspection in November 2007 the college has almost doubled in size. The previous inspection of boarding was in March 2008. There are 482 students currently on roll, aged from 14 to 25 years, including 28 students of compulsory school age. No student has a statement of special educational needs. All students are from overseas and represent 55 nationalities. Most students come from China, Vietnam and Russian speaking countries. The college is non-selective, although to gain a place students are required to achieve minimum standards in English and in academic studies in their own country. All students are privately funded. There are 104 boarders and the large majority of students are resident, either at the McMillan Student Village, which is on the same site as the college, or in home stay accommodation with host families. The long-term aim of the college is to prepare students for admission to British universities.

## Evaluation of the school

Bellerbys College meets its aim and provides a good quality of education. Over their time at the college, students make good progress in this very harmonious and diligent community; this is because of the good curriculum, teaching and support that students receive. The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is inadequate overall and fails to meet the regulations related to welfare, health and safety and the suitability of staff because aspects of the arrangements to ensure safeguarding, including staff recruitment procedures, lack rigour. As a result of these failings, the boarding provision is also inadequate and, while it has many strengths, it

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000014\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1)

is insufficiently tailored to meet the needs of the youngest students. It does not meet five of the national minimum standards for the boarding provision. Since the last inspection report the college has maintained its quality of education through a period of considerable expansion and has addressed many, but not all, of the issues raised in that report.

## **Quality of education**

The good curriculum successfully achieves the college aim of enabling students to gain places in British universities of their choice. A wide range of courses provides opportunities for students of different ages and starting points to fulfil their ambitions.

The foundation programme, a one-year accredited course, enables access to approximately 50 'partner' universities. It has a good range of subjects that are related to an individual's choice of university area of study in the future, for example, art, business, engineering, law, media, and science. The two-year A level course enables students to study the appropriate subjects to help them achieve their chosen university course. The GCSE courses, which include English, mathematics, science, history and art, are an effective foundation for future study and progression in learning. The English Language Preparation Programme is successful in ensuring that students develop the necessary proficiency in speaking, writing, reading and listening so that they are well prepared for their future studies. The syllabuses of different subjects are used well to ensure coverage, good pace and rigour.

The college provides a rich programme of extra-curricular enrichment activities both during the college day and as part of the residential provision in which most students take part. These include economics, politics and business clubs hosting a variety of outside speakers, Spanish and French classes, dance, music and media clubs. Provision for personal, health and social education is available through the college's tutorial structure and tutors follow the college's scheme of work. There is some variation in this provision, but it is satisfactory overall and it is strongest in the foundation and A level programmes. Support for students' applications to university is excellent. Boarders have a good network of support, including a welfare officer, residential supervisors and a specialist Chinese speaking support worker. This helps students to develop appropriate skills for living in London and for adult life.

A well-resourced library, good information technology resources and a newly introduced virtual learning environment support students well. Additional support is made available as required for any students experiencing difficulties with their learning. Teachers give of their time willingly to help students.

Overall, teaching is good. Lessons are planned and structured well. There is a good pace to the lessons. A range of activities is provided so that interest is maintained. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They adapt their teaching styles well to suit the students' learning styles and they are very aware that a student's prior

experience of education or language skills may mean that individuals need support. Outstanding practice was observed during the inspection when the tutor carefully drew out responses from all students, asking them to reflect on their learning and carefully challenged them to acquire new knowledge, introducing new concepts gradually that were then explored through whole-class and small group work.

Excellent teacher–student relationships promote a very effective learning environment. In all lessons students are focused, diligent and cooperative. In the best lessons they are all actively involved, questioning and supporting each other. Classroom management is very effective. Homework is set and followed up in lessons, so giving students additional opportunities to develop and practise their skills. The punctuality to lessons of a few students is unsatisfactory.

Effective assessment on arrival, particularly in the use of English, means that students are placed in appropriate groups. Ongoing monitoring of students' responses during lessons results in sensitive challenge to their misconceptions by tutors and effective guidance of individuals. Marking offers helpful comments and feedback and leads to improved learning in many subjects. Reports are written six times a year and sent to students, to parents and carers in their home language and to the educational agents who place the students. The managers of each programme comment on all reports and monitor any underperformance, which is then discussed with the vice principal and appropriate action is taken.

Students make good progress. The very large majority of students gain places at the university of their choice, with a growing number of students offered places at Britain's leading universities. The majority of students gain the highest grades in their A level subjects and grades A\* to C in their GCSEs. Students make at least good progress, with some making outstanding progress in English proficiency, as measured by the International English Language Testing System. Students' work is of a good standard, and is clear and well presented, whether it is handwritten or prepared using information technology.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Overall, students demonstrate good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Within this, their spiritual development is satisfactory: students are reflective and follow their own religious and spiritual beliefs where appropriate. Attendance is good. The college is a relaxed, informal and racially harmonious community where students demonstrate high levels of mutual respect. They are polite, considerate and courteous young people. They listen to and are prepared to help each other. Students enjoy college and their experiences are enhanced by the inclusive and positive approach of staff. They participate well in their studies; their good behaviour contributes to the smooth running of the college and they take part in the variety of clubs and impromptu events with eagerness.

Students develop a keen moral awareness through their discussions in lessons and in tutorials. College debates have covered topics such as euthanasia, hanging and the legalisation of drugs. Students have a good sense of right and wrong. They follow college rules and are aware of sanctions. They report no instances of bullying. They have good social awareness and a sense of social responsibility, demonstrated in their participation in college representative groups and charity fundraising. Through their studies they develop a suitable knowledge of English public services and institutions. The students prepare very well for their economic well-being and their future by developing the skills to live effectively as students in another country and being successful in their studies. They have numerous opportunities to develop good cultural awareness as they come from many different cultural backgrounds. This is to their advantage in lessons as they are encouraged to share their different experiences and traditions. The regular celebration of different key festivals and the incorporation of familiar dishes into the menus of the cafeteria provide active recognition of the diverse college clientele.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is inadequate. Staff, including the principal and vice principal, take great care to get to know and support individual students. Students have confidence that any concerns will be sorted out by tutors, programme managers and residential staff. However, the college child protection policy does not meet requirements as it has not been recently reviewed and is not clear enough about the role of outside agencies. There has been no systematic training of staff in safeguarding and staff are not clear about their responsibilities. Procedures when recruiting staff are not robust, as professional and character references are not consistently obtained and medical fitness is not always checked. The college does not carry out any further checks on foreign nationals for whom a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check is unlikely to reveal their full background. The college has a suitable policy in place to ensure that educational visits are risk assessed appropriately. This is applied inconsistently and recent risk assessments are incomplete.

Recent improvements to the site have improved security so that the campus can now only be entered with an identity card or with the permission of reception staff. There are comprehensive security and prevention of fire arrangements, including risk assessments, in place. The college takes appropriate steps to ensure that students are briefed about keeping safe in London, including road safety. There are clear policies related to first aid, behaviour and conduct. Procedures to monitor attendance are clear and absence followed up quickly. The college cafeteria provides a wide variety of nutritious, healthy food. There are no specialist facilities on the college site to participate in exercise but students have satisfactory opportunities through extra-curricular activities.

There are concerns related to the boarding provision that are linked to the issues detailed above. In addition, the lack of particular, age-appropriate support for the

youngest students is a weakness. These matters are reported in the section on the effectiveness of the boarding provision below.

The college action plan meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All staff have a current CRB check. There are appropriate procedures to ensure that supply staff and contractors are checked. The school maintains a single central register of such checks. However, the necessary checks have not been made to confirm each member of staff's medical fitness, or further checks made on persons who have lived outside the United Kingdom, where a CRB check may not be sufficient. The minimum standards for recruitment of staff to work in the residential provision have not been met.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The college is a well-maintained, pleasant environment which enables safe and effective learning. Communal areas are small but the cafeteria is used effectively for a wide variety of events. Students can also socialise in small groups in the residences.

### **Provision of information**

The college meets all the requirements related to the provision of information for parents, carers and others, including that particular to boarders. The college has an informative website and prospectus and sends a detailed letter to parents and carers at the beginning of a student's placement. The college also has effective relationships with local education agents in a wide variety of countries. The principal and vice principal regularly take trips abroad to liaise and recruit and meet parents and carers regularly as part of their work.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The college has a clear, written complaints procedure that meets all of the relevant regulations and the national minimum standards for boarding.

### **Effectiveness of the boarding provision**

The boarding provision was inspected under the national minimum standards for boarding schools. These standards were used as the college caters for a wide range of students including some students under the age of sixteen. With the extensive range of courses available, a large number of students are over the age of eighteen.

The quality of boarding is inadequate. The boarding provision has numerous strengths and the majority of outcome areas are judged to be good. Shortfalls in two outcome areas, however, have a significant impact, resulting in the overall judgement. There are elements of unsatisfactory practice concerning safeguarding, staff recruitment, risk management and the care of younger students. All except one of the previous recommendations identified at the last inspection have been addressed. The recommendation regarding obtaining satisfactory references is repeated.

The college effectively supports students with their health care. Students receive the necessary assistance to register with a local doctor. A person with a first aid qualification is on duty at all times. Staff now record any medication students may bring from their home country. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their health. They have a range of health promotion leaflets addressing various topics. Although there are no sports facilities on site, students can engage in numerous physical activities. They can obtain subsidised membership at a local leisure centre. Students can also attend dance classes, play football, basketball or join a running club.

Catering arrangements strongly reflect the international student base. Students influence menu plans and enjoy dishes from all over the world. There is an excellent understanding of cultural approaches to mealtimes. An example is having rice and dim sum at breakfast time. Foods on offer are nutritious and meet diverse dietary requirements. Meat is halal and there are vegetarian, gluten, dairy and nut-free options. The cafeteria is a hub of social activity. Along with dining, students can access the internet and watch television. The cafeteria also hosts other events which includes parties, cultural celebrations, games and cinema nights.

The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. The college is exceptional in its management of a student population of 55 nationalities. Chinese students have their own counsellor who assists in pastoral and educational matters. Students have great respect for each other and there are no issues relating to discrimination.

The vast majority of students feel safe. They know how to complain and there are no issues with bullying. Disciplinary measures assist boarders to take responsibility for their actions. A good system of rewards and the focus on positive reinforcement motivate students' behaviour. Students benefit from 24-hour security. Their boarding accommodation is notably secure from public intrusion. There are good fire safety arrangements. The comprehensive risk assessment of the premises also contributes to the safe physical environment.

Certain aspects of the college's practice do not safeguard students. Staff recruitment is not robust. The college employs staff without first obtaining two satisfactory references. Not all staff have had child protection training. The procedures for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse omit the timescale for referral to the local authority. In addition, staff do not consistently record essential information



when risk assessing trips.

Students benefit from a good induction into boarding life. The college is also particularly good at preparing students for university life. The extra-curricular activities assist with their personal development. The semi-independent nature of boarding also offers older students a taste of university. Students are able to express their views regarding the boarding provision at a range of meetings. They also maintain contact with relatives, friends and other involved persons.

The majority of students reside in age-specific blocks of flats in the college grounds. Students benefit from their own single room. Rooms are comfortable, with modern furnishings. They include a private study area, shelving for books and internet access. There is sufficient storage space. Students have the privacy of their own en-suite bathroom with shower facilities. A communal lounge is also available. The college also offers students over the age of 16 the opportunity of living with a family. Staff recruit and monitor specific households for their home-stay scheme.

The boarding provision has a dedicated team to meet students' needs. These include welfare posts, residential supervisors and a warden. Supervision of students is adequate. There is little difference, however, in provision for students under 16 and those over 16. The college gives younger students a great deal of freedom and autonomy. These result in some of them not always eating breakfast or a healthy meal. Younger boarders do not benefit from a nurturing, parental style of care.

## **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.<sup>4</sup>

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of students (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of students have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State by reviewing the child protection policy annually and making sure it meets requirements, systematically training all staff and implementing safer recruitment procedures (paragraph 7)
- ensure that arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders with regard to the national minimum standards (paragraph 8)
- ensure that the procedures for ensuring students' health and safety on educational visits are carried out consistently (paragraph 12).

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<sup>4</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made)

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- ensure that medical fitness is checked (paragraph 19(2)(b))
- ensure that further checks are carried out in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining a CRB is not sufficient (paragraph 19(2)(d))
- ensure that national minimum standards are met in respect of staff who care for, train or supervise students in the residential accommodation (paragraph 19(2)(e))
- ensure that the single central register shows that in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining a CRB is not sufficient, a further check has been made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 22(3) and 22(4)).

In order to meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools, the college should:

- ensure that the student protection policy includes a requirement for referral to be made within 24 hours of allegations or suspicions of abuse (national minimum standard 3.2)
- ensure that all staff at all levels (including newly appointed and ancillary staff) have been given briefing or training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse and know what action they should take in response to such suspicions or allegations (national minimum standard 3.5)
- ensure that guidance adequately covers the college's approach to boarding and the safeguarding and promotion of boarders' welfare, any special features of boarding, and the organisation of the boarding day (national minimum standard 35.3)
- ensure that offers of appointment to staff and others are subject to satisfactory references (national minimum standard 38.3)
- implement a consistent and effective system of risk assessment regarding outside trips (national minimum standard 29.2).

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### 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				✓
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### The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision				✓
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Type of school</b>	Further Education Tutorial College
<b>Date school opened</b>	1997
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–25 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Female: 211    Male: 271    Total: 482
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Female: 0    Male: 0    Total: 0
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Female: 52    Male: 52    Total: 104
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Male: 0    Female: 0    Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£10,000–17,000
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£17,000–26,000
<b>Address of school</b>	Bounty House, Stowage, London, SE8 3DE
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8694 7000
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Aquin@studygroup.com">Aquin@studygroup.com</a>
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P Langham
<b>Proprietor</b>	Bellerbys Education Services