

Chelsea Independent College

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi



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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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Chelsea Independent College is a co-educational institution that is registered for up to 120 students between the ages of 14 and 20 years. It is located in modern buildings very near Fulham Broadway underground station in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. It opened in September 2004 and moved to the present site in April 2006. There are currently 150 students on roll, aged between 15 and 23 years, of whom 22 are of compulsory school age studying GCSE courses. Approximately half of the students are from overseas, including a high proportion from the Far East. In all, about 30 nationalities are represented in the student body. No student has a statement of special educational needs. Most students take courses with the aim of gaining admission to British universities. A significant number of students plan to read medicine and science-related subjects. The college was last inspected in May 2008 when it met all but one of the regulations for independent schools.

Since August 2011, the college premises benefit from the addition of an annexe located in an adjacent street and this inspection has also established the maximum capacity of the new premises and the extent to which the requirements of the material change are met.

The college aims to provide an environment and ethos in which young people discover and develop their varied skills and talents, while also deriving from their daily challenges a sense of purpose, self-discipline and consideration for others. It stresses its ability to provide small teaching groups and to 'cater for students from a wide range of academic and cultural backgrounds'.

Evaluation of the school

Chelsea Independent College provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. Students benefit from good pastoral care and value the warm, caring and relaxed atmosphere created by the staff; they develop a good sense of responsibility

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

and their behaviour is outstanding. The good curriculum and good quality of teaching combine to ensure that students make good progress and are well prepared for their future. Arrangements for safeguarding students meet regulatory requirements and the provision for their welfare, health and safety is good. The material change is recommended for up to 40 students in the annexe. The college has rectified the shortcoming reported in the last inspection and now meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good, with both exemplary and satisfactory features. It serves all students well, whatever their individual needs and chosen pathways.

The breadth of the curriculum is exemplary. Students enrolled on GCSE or IGCSE courses study a broad curriculum including a core of English language, mathematics, one science and a modern foreign language along with five options. The possibility to complete GCSE courses in one year is increasingly popular and is the chosen pathway of the majority of GCSE students currently on roll. All students have two hours a week of compulsory sport. The range of academic, aesthetic and practical options helps students to develop a wide range of skills. In the sixth form, the college provides a very wide range of A levels offered as one-year courses or as the traditional two-year route. Of the 35 subjects available, students tend to favour the sciences, mathematics, psychology, economics and business studies.

Students feel very well prepared for their future lives, both through the strong provision for academic and vocational subjects and through the quality of careers advice. Well-considered careers guidance is provided to different groups of students, including those aspiring to gain entry to Oxford and Cambridge universities and to medical schools. The programme of personal, health and social education includes citizenship and is satisfactory. Its structure is being further improved to maximise the use of tutor groups and deepen students' multicultural awareness. Curriculum enrichment is satisfactory and students enjoy an appropriate range of educational visits to museums and galleries, including residential visits abroad. Aesthetic extra-curricular activities are currently limited to a singing club and some students would welcome regularly planned opportunities for drama and music.

The planning of the curriculum enables learning to be personalised and timetables to be individualised, giving students the flexibility to make choices that are the most relevant to their needs. Good subject planning supports the teaching well. There is an adequate range of resources to teach the curriculum. However, some students report that they cannot always access a computer for their work. The promotion of students' literacy skills in all subjects has improved since the last inspection, and in

all lessons there is an appropriate emphasis on developing students' speaking and listening skills and confidence. However, the college has rightly identified that a broader range of strategies is required to help students at various levels of learning English to attain a higher level of proficiency in English and so make even better academic progress generally. Nevertheless, these students make good progress because they receive timely targeted support.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teaching is characterised by excellent relationships that promote a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere conducive to active learning. Teaching is typically underpinned by very good knowledge of the subject and of examination criteria, and by high expectations of what students can achieve, based on a good understanding of their prior attainment and needs. Teachers use probing questioning and discussion to deepen students' understanding of a topic. In most lessons, the teaching ensures that all students participate in the discussion. All teachers plan activities that promote well students' listening and speaking skills and which focus appropriately on the language required to master the topic. Students who learn English as an additional language are encouraged to use dictionaries. The vast majority of teachers consistently give the visual support that students need, especially those who are at various levels of learning English. However, on occasion, teachers rely too much on students' auditory memory. Where the teaching is outstanding, it promotes a high level of intellectual development by systematically teaching principles which students can then apply to different scenarios. Such teaching also pitches the discussion at consistently challenging levels of analysis that stretch students of all abilities.

The assessment framework, centred on the continuous assessment of students' learning, enables the college to monitor closely the progress of individual students. Students gain a good understanding of how to improve through verbal and written feedback from teachers and a good understanding of examination criteria. As a result of a good curriculum and good teaching, most students make good progress in relation to their varying starting points. The college has rightly identified as a priority for further development the need to use more sharply the information from assessments to track students' progress and so help them to make even faster progress. Nevertheless, most students achieve well in English, mathematics and science at GCSE level. Their good performance in A-level examinations ensures that most gain entry to a university in the United Kingdom and access a course of their choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The staff successfully create a warm and caring atmosphere based on mutual respect in which students can flourish. Students are known as individuals by their tutors and teachers, which gives them a sense of security. They enjoy their studies, attend regularly and

develop positive attitudes to advanced learning. They particularly appreciate that teachers readily give up their time to provide them with extra assistance. One parent expresses the views of many students when saying, 'An excellent college, with dedicated staff who want the best for my daughter.' Students form positive relationships with others, whatever their cultural background, and feel free from bullying and harassment. Their good moral development is reflected in their outstanding behaviour, good manners and consideration for others.

Small tutor groups and classes give students a sense of belonging. Students demonstrate a mature understanding of their responsibilities because they are given opportunities to develop independence and use their initiative. The college rightly identified that students needed to deepen their awareness of diversity, to contribute more actively to the cohesion of the college community, to shoulder responsibilities commensurate with their ambitions and capabilities, and to extend their teamwork and leadership skills. As a result, the college has recently raised the profile of the student council and introduced the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The active council represents students' views on college facilities, organises social events and is in charge of the buddy system that aims to link overseas students with English first-language speakers to improve their English. In addition, students contribute to the twice-termly college newsletter and take charge of some clubs and cultural events. They raise funds for charity. Students develop a sound awareness of British institutions through the citizenship programme and educational visits. The richness of the cultural diversity of the college is insufficiently tapped to raise students' awareness of diversity beyond satisfactory levels.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good in both the main building and the annexe. The structure of the pastoral care system has further strengthened since the last inspection with the institution of weekly tutorials that enable the staff to support students more closely. The essential policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks and promoting students' welfare, including behaviour, anti-bullying, first aid, health and safety, and fire safety, are up-to-date and are implemented consistently.

Staff and the designated persons for child protection have received the appropriate training. The child protection policy is sufficiently detailed to give staff the guidance they need. Procedures, for the appointment of staff and the involvement of volunteers, pay due regard to the latest guidance. Supervision is good and accidents are very rare. The college has rigorous procedures to monitor students' attendance and punctuality. Consequently, students feel safe and well cared for. Their awareness of healthy eating and drinking is raised throughout the curriculum. However, this is not fully supported by the range of products sold in the vending

machine that includes foods high in sugar and salt. Students appreciate having access to water throughout the day but would also, quite justifiably, like to have healthy options. Most students are happy with the local sports facilities but a few say that they would like the college to arrange more opportunities for physical exercise.

The college has prepared a three-year plan to increase accessibility in conformity with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks are carried out on staff, proprietors and volunteers working at the college to ensure their suitability to work with children and young people. These checks are appropriately recorded in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation enable safe and effective learning. The new annexe provides teaching accommodation for up to 40 students, which brings the overall capacity of the college to 160 students. For students of compulsory school age, the college makes effective use of local facilities for games. There is limited, although satisfactory, outdoor space for recreation that is used by some students in good weather. However, students of compulsory school age are allowed off site during the lunch break, with parental permission. In addition, students enjoy using the indoor social areas for recreation.

Provision of information

Parents, carers and others receive the full range of required information, and it is accurate and up-to-date. Parents and carers feel well informed of their children's progress through thrice-yearly formal meetings with teachers and seven reports each year. Those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires express a high level of satisfaction with the college.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures comply with all requirements to ensure that complaints are handled fairly and promptly.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Provide regularly planned opportunities for drama and music to further extend students' creative and literacy skills.
- Help students to progress at an even faster rate, as identified by the college, by:
 - implementing a broader range of strategies to help students who are at various levels of learning English to attain a higher level of proficiency in English
 - using the information from assessments more sharply to track students' progress.
- Provide students with more opportunities to develop a deeper appreciation of diversity and a stronger commitment to healthy lifestyles.

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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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Day tutorial and sixth form college		
Date school opened	September 2004		
Age range of pupils	15–23		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 90	Girls: 60	Total: 150
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,380 to £16,035		
Address of school	517-523 Fulham Road London SW6 1HD		
Telephone number	020 7610 1114		
Email address	headteacher@cic.ac		
Principal	Paul Edward Fear		
Proprietor	Chelsea Independent College Ltd (Paul Hunt)		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

7 November 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Chelsea Independent College

Thank you for your warm welcome when I inspected your college. I enjoyed my visit, including opportunities to talk with some of you about your experiences at the college. The inspection judged that Chelsea Independent College provides you with a good quality of education and that you make a significant contribution to its success. I was particularly pleased to see that:

- you enjoy the warm, caring and relaxed atmosphere created by the staff and live together in harmony
- you show outstanding behaviour and very positive attitudes to work and you take the responsibility to attend regularly
- you appreciate that the wide range of subjects on offer, the good quality of careers advice and the good quality of teaching prepare you well for your future
- you make good progress in relation to your starting points.

To bring about further improvement, I have asked the Principal to:

- consider giving you regularly planned opportunities for drama and music to further extend your creative and literacy skills
- help you to progress at an even faster rate by implementing a broader range of strategies to help those of you who are at various levels of learning English to attain a higher level of proficiency in English; and by using the information from assessments more sharply to track your progress with more rigour
- support you in gaining a deeper appreciation of diversity and a stronger commitment to healthy lifestyles.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Michèle Messaoudi
Lead Inspector