

Bellerbys College

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin
Social care inspector	Sophie Wood

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

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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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, and under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools^{1,2,3}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Bellerbys College in Greenwich is one of four colleges of this name in the UK, and is owned by Study Group, 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. There are 427 students currently on roll, aged from 14 to 25 years, including 25 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 a total of 261 boarders; 101 of whom are under the age of 18. 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. The college was last inspected in February 2011.

Context of the inspection

An integrated inspection of the college took place on 2–3 February 2011. With regard to the educational provision, the inspection found failings in the regulations related to the welfare, health and safety of students and the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors. A number of the national minimum standards for the boarding provision were not met. The college submitted an action plan and this was evaluated in July 2011. The action plan was judged to be satisfactory. The purpose of this inspection was to evaluate the college's progress in implementing its action plan.

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

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

During the inspection of February 2011, it was found that the college's child protection policy was in place but undated. The designated person for safeguarding had attended the required training but lacked clear knowledge about child protection, including the importance of links with the local safeguarding board. There was no systematic training of other staff. Programme leaders were unclear as to what steps they would take if a safeguarding issue were to arise. Staff signed to agree that they had a copy of the college handbook which included policies on staff capability, disciplinary procedures, and health and safety. However, child protection was not one of the policies mentioned. Medical fitness was not checked for teachers and support staff were not checked systematically for their suitability to work with young people.

Examination of files showed that safer recruitment procedures were not followed. It was also found that risk assessments for outside visits were in place but these were inconsistently maintained; for example mobile numbers were not recorded and dates were missing.

In its action plan, the college set out a series of strategies to review and improve the relevant policies and their implementation. As a result of carrying through these strategies, the college has made the necessary improvements. This present inspection found that the child protection policy now contains details of the local safeguarding officer and timeframes when handling an allegation of child abuse. The policy is dated and a review date is indicated. With regard to recruitment, all prospective staff must now produce two written references and a declaration of medical fitness. These documents have been procured for existing staff as well. New staff that have lived outside the UK must produce a 'certificate of good conduct'. Support staff undergo all of the necessary checks. Details of all the checks feature in the single central record.

All new staff now sign to acknowledge that they have received and read the college's child protection policy. Safeguarding training sessions, tailor made to the college's own circumstances, have been carried out by a representative of the local authority. The designated person for child protection is clear about his role and about policies and procedures related to safeguarding. Risk assessments for educational visits now contain all of the necessary details.

The inspection of the boarding provision in February 2011 found a number of failures to meet the national minimum standards. The child protection policy lacked an essential detail, training and written guidance in safeguarding for staff were inadequate, and references for newly appointed staff were insufficient. As in the education provision, risk assessments for visits out of college were not always adequate.

The college included the remediation of all these weaknesses in its action plan.

This inspection found that steps have been systematically implemented by the college to improve upon its safeguarding systems for boarders. Updated child protection policies and procedures are underpinned by a rolling training programme for all staff members; those with designated child protection responsibilities receive additional external training which includes safer recruitment. Staff members are appointed subject to robust recruitment procedures. Appropriate checks and references are conducted; however, written references are not always being followed up by telephone verification. Residential supervisors receive a clear and thorough induction period. Written guidance is comprehensive. Boarders' safety while on college trips is protected through the implementation of detailed risk assessments. The whereabouts of boarders at all times outside of the college day is routinely checked and monitored so as to further ensure their welfare.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The college has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements and national minimum standards.

Recommendation:

To ensure that the college operates safe recruitment procedures and vets staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State (National Minimum Standard 14.1).

This recommendation is made within the context of securing the telephone verification of written references.

School details

School status	Independent
Type of school	Further education tutorial college
Date school opened	1997
Age range of pupils	14–25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 234 Girls: 193 Total: 427
Number of boarders	Boys: 140 Girls: 121 Total: 261
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,000–£17,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£17,000–£26,000
Address of school	Bounty House Stowage London SE8 3DE
Telephone number	020 8694 7000
Email address	aquin@studygroup.com
Headteacher	P Langman
Proprietor	Bellerbys Education Services