

Bellerbys College Cambridge

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI
Social care inspector	Deirdra Keating

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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}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by 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.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Bellerbys College is located on three teaching sites in Cambridge. It was opened in 1996 and is owned, along with three other colleges in London, Brighton and Oxford, by Study Group UK Limited. The college's main aim is *'to provide a quality UK education to an international student body, preparing them for a UK University, and into positive, responsible people, who can work and co-operate with others while developing the knowledge and skills to achieve their true potential, and return to their countries to contribute to their own societies.'* All students are from overseas and most have English as a second or third language. The intake is very diverse and currently students come from 50 different countries. There are 420 students on roll aged 15 to 21 years. A very small number are below the age of 16 years. Most students are resident in the school's boarding facilities or are placed with host families in the town; a very few others make their own arrangements. There is currently no student identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inspection of boarding provision was carried out at the same time as that of education. The education provision was last inspected in April 2008 and boarding provision in February 2009.

Evaluation of the school

The college provides a good quality of education. It meets all the regulatory requirements for independent schools, which is an improvement from the last inspection. The point for development outlined in the previous report has been addressed. The school meets its aims very successfully. Strengths of the school include students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their outstanding behaviour. Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good, and safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements. The curriculum and teaching and assessment are good and students make good

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

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

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

progress. The national minimum standards for boarding schools are met except for national minimum standard 5 Boarding Accommodation, and national minimum standard 2.3 Boarders' induction and support. However, these do not have a direct impact on the overall outcomes for boarders because the overall effectiveness for the boarding experience is good and supports students' personal and academic progress well. A key strength of the boarding provision is the dedicated staff team who utilise their expertise and skills to provide highly individualised support.

Quality of education

The good curriculum is underpinned by effective written policies and schemes of work. The school has worked hard to improve these since the last inspection and, while there remains some variation, the overall quality is good. The schemes provide useful guidance to teachers, including the resources they need. In the best schemes of work, there are clear learning intentions for every topic and page references and additional resources are carefully listed.

Students at all levels have access to a suitably broad range of subjects. The college provides four main courses. There is an English Language Preparation Programme (ELPP) for those whose level of English is not sufficient to start their chosen academic courses. This is particularly effective, evidenced by students' rapid progress in acquiring English, both spoken and written. A Foundation course, in a range of subjects, leads directly to university entry. This is externally accredited and the college has developed good links with a large number of universities who recognise this qualification, resulting in students having a good choice of universities to apply to. In addition, the college provides A-level and AS-level courses, as well as International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) subjects. The college is adept at matching students to courses that best suit their academic aspirations and aptitudes. The tutor system is a strength of the school. Tutors know their students very well, as evidenced in the good quality twice termly reports to parents and carers, and are able to give effective advice as well as monitoring students' academic and social development over time. Students say they can talk to their tutors and feel confident in their support and advice. Students receive good careers guidance from their tutors, teachers and external local expertise.

The small number of students of compulsory school age take IGCSE courses over three or four terms. All these students take English as an additional language and mathematics, and then choose from a suitable range of options, for example, art, science, media and economics. All students are provided with good personal, social and health education and citizenship. The college provides many opportunities for students to take part in cultural activities both in Cambridge and London, and this supports students' cultural development and their understanding of British life. Evening clubs and events are well attended, for example, the popular football club on the Manor campus.

Most teaching observed during the inspection was good or better. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they

have a good understanding of course requirements. In the good and outstanding lessons, teachers explain new concepts well and encourage students to engage in purposeful dialogue. They ask challenging questions to gauge understanding, which encourages students to develop their own ideas and to increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject taught. The teaching interests the students and fires their imagination; for example, in physics when students were encouraged to debate the effects of gravitational and magnetic forces on objects. There were good opportunities for them to assess the quality of their peers' work. Students are given good opportunities to express their ideas and feelings by talking to a partner first. This helps them bridge the gap between thinking in their home language and expressing their ideas in English. However, this was not a feature of all lessons observed. Sometimes teachers talk for too long and do not give students the opportunity to reflect on and apply their own experiences and culture in their learning. There are currently few opportunities for senior and middle leaders to observe teaching and learning on a regular cycle and enable good practice to be shared across the school.

Teachers use assessment well in lessons and tasks are well matched to the abilities of the students, with an appropriate level of challenge for the more able. Students' work is neat and well presented. Marking is regular and constructive with good examples of how students could improve the quality of their work. The school has invested in new computers and students are particularly impressed with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), especially for homework activities. As one student said, 'The VLE is perfect. You can download resources from your lessons like the teachers' multi-media presentations.' Interactive whiteboards are used by teachers to facilitate and enhance the learning of students, an improvement since the last inspection, but these are not always used by students to extend their knowledge and understanding.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere at the college. Students say they enjoy attending because they have friends and staff who help them with their learning. They made comments such as: 'We are happy here. We all come from different countries and we all get on well with one another.' The behaviour of the students is outstanding. They are very clear about the college's code of conduct and move around the building carefully and considerately under vigilant staff supervision. Students are equally well behaved and considerate of others in the boarding provision and praise the effective support they receive from staff. They respect and support each other, evidenced, for example, by their willingness to listen to and take account of the views of others. The good range of activities available within the college and beyond contributes well to the students' cultural development.

The college is well respected locally and has a range of opportunities for students' voices to be heard through committees and Students' Representative Council (SCR). For example, the SCR meets weekly with the Deputy Principal which gives a good opportunity for students to contribute to college academic and social life. Students

take an active part in model United Nations debates, the English speaking debates and motivational speeches. Students also make a good contribution to the wider community. They raise money for local, national and international charities. Some of the students have had work experience with Oxfam and fully understand the need to help others less fortunate than themselves. Learning about the British justice system, taking part in Cambridge University debates and visits to places of interest provide valued learning experiences for students to gain a better knowledge and understanding of public institutions and services in England. Boarders contribute to the boarding community and their views are represented by the student council and key staff. Students' standards of behaviour, together with high levels of attendance, positive attitudes towards learning and the generally strong provision of basic skills, set them up very well for the next stage of their education and prepare them well for the future.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The education and boarding promotion of students' welfare, health and safety is good. Most of the national minimum standards for boarding are met. Safeguarding procedures are robust and the revised policy meets requirements. All staff are fully trained in child protection at requisite levels and are alert to possible concerns. Parents and carers have access to the safeguarding policy via the college's website and on request. Staff know the students very well, leading to highly positive relationships. Students say there is no bullying in the college or the boarding provision. Students who spoke to inspectors and completed questionnaires said they felt very safe and well cared for. In the words of one student, 'Security is tight and we never think about our safety so it must be good!' Students are confident that any problems or difficulties are dealt with by their teachers, tutors or by the wardens in their residences. For example, one student said, 'Any time I have a problem, I can go to the warden and they always listen.'

Students have good opportunities to live a healthy lifestyle. There is a good selection of healthy choices that reflect the cultural needs of the students at lunch and supper times. Some students expressed concern about canteen food in their questionnaires; however, the inspection team found that the college is doing its best to meet students' wishes. There are good opportunities for physical activity. Risk assessments are up-to-date and robust. Boarders adhere to clear curfew guidelines, tailored to their ages. Good recording systems show that boarders are in residence by agreed times. The college meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The college has effectively carried out the required checks on all staff and proprietors prior to their appointment, including host families, to make sure there are no reasons why they should not be employed to work with or care for children. The required checks are recorded in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The college and its grounds comply with regulatory requirements. Boarding accommodation is provided with regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools. However, it does not meet all the requirements because there are some minor repairs that have not been addressed. In addition, some of the communal areas have furniture that is worn and torn. These areas are in need of redecoration and refurbishment in order to provide all boarders with communal areas that are pleasant and well maintained. Classrooms are in good condition and suitable for the curriculum and numbers on roll. The new art and media classrooms in Bateman Street are well equipped and provide an excellent learning environment. The accommodation is on three different sites. There are communal facilities and single rooms for all students. Bedrooms are small, but they have sufficient facilities for study and comfort; some are more personalised than others, based on individual choice. Host families provide accommodation to meet the individual needs of the boarders and this is rigorously monitored by the accommodation staff.

Provision of information

The college provides clear, accurate and up-to-date information for current and prospective parents, carers, inspectors, Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) on request. There is a clear and helpful prospectus and the website is being updated so that it includes all required policies and gives parents and carers even easier access to them. The college has established aims and objectives which are shared with parents and carers, students and staff. This ensures that all parents and carers are well-informed about the education and boarding provision. All the questionnaires returned from parents and carers were positive. The college is in regular contact with parents and carers by telephone and electronically to keep them suitably informed about their children's education. Leaders regularly visit students' home countries and hold meetings with parents and carers, thus enabling them to discuss educational matters face-to-face. Written reports have improved since the last inspection and are now consistently good.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The college's complaints procedure meets the requirements.

Leadership and management of boarding

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are good. The boarding aims and principles are implemented well in practice and boarders benefit from a well organised provision. The staff team are dedicated and committed to providing a high quality service. They work well with academic staff to ensure that boarders' diverse needs are recognised and barriers to progress are quickly identified. Good individual support enables boarders to develop and achieve their potential.

There are good relationships with parents and carers, who are consistently well informed. Information is shared in a variety of ways. Parents and carers report that

contact with the college is good; they receive regular reports of progress and are able to contact the college using a range of different media.

The staff monitor well the boarding provision and the outcomes for boarders and use boarders' feedback to make adjustments and improve the quality of boarding. Boarders know that staff listen to their concerns and value their views. Complaint procedures are given a high profile throughout the college. Boarders are signposted to appropriate help lines and adults in the college who have specific regard for their individual welfare. However, there is no person outside the staff team identified for support or information about the Children's Rights Director.

There have been significant improvements to boarding since the last inspection. One of the key strengths is the skilled and cohesive staff team who are led with efficiency and skill by the head of accommodation and welfare. Overall, the boarding staff team work very well to enable boarders to enjoy the boarding experience and make good academic achievements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated regulations except for:

- 5.1 Boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders complies with any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'), is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any boarders with restricted mobility. Toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for boarders.
- 5.2 Accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between genders, age groups and accommodation for adults. Bedding is clean and suitable, and is sufficiently warm.
- 2.3 The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the boarding and teaching staff of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school. The school ensures that boarders know who this person is, and how to contact them. Boarders are also provided with one or more appropriate

helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Children's Rights Director, to ring in case of problems or distress.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Improve the monitoring of teaching and learning so that teachers have more frequent opportunities to share their practice with programme managers, heads of department and each other so that the school's curriculum policy is evident in all lessons.

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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Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience		✓		
Outcomes for boarders		✓		
Quality of boarding provision and care		✓		
Boarders' safety		✓		
Leadership and management of boarding		✓		

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		✓		
Outcomes for residential pupils		✓		
Quality of residential provision and care		✓		
Residential pupils' safety		✓		
Leadership and management of the residential provision		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Boarding School		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	15-21		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 241	Girls: 176	Total: 417
Number of boarders	Boys: 215	Girls: 156	Total: 371
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)	£14,790 – £19,470		
Annual fees (boarders)	£19,650 – £33,510		
Address of school	Queens Campus, Bateman Street, Cambridge CB2 1LU		
Telephone number	01223 363159		
Email address	jrushton@studygroup.com		
Headteacher	John Rushton		
Proprietor	Bellerbys Educational Services, part of Study Group UK Limited		

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.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Bellerbys College Cambridge, Cambridge, CB2 1LU

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school this week. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We met with groups of you, observed lessons and looked at your work. Everyone we talked to told us how much they enjoyed studying at the college and how good the teachers and boarding staff are. Some of you said the food in the canteen is not always healthy and there is not sufficient variety. We looked at the menus and talked with staff about this: we feel the college is doing everything it can to fulfil your wishes.

The college provides you with a good quality of education because the teaching and curriculum are good and you make good progress in both learning English and in your chosen academic courses. There are some outstanding aspects of the college which are:

- how well you gel as a community given the many different countries and cultural backgrounds you come from
- the relationships between you and your teachers and boarding staff
- your behaviour which is excellent at all times and reflects how much you enjoy your lessons and life at the college
- how the college prepares you for university both academically and socially.

We discussed with the Principal and Deputy Principal how the college might improve further. They agreed that programme managers and heads of department need to monitor teaching more frequently so that the best practice can be shared across the school. The inspection team would like to wish you every success in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

