

# CATS College London

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>

## **Information about the college**

CATS College is an independent international college in Bloomsbury, London. The college is registered to provide an education for young men and women aged 14 to 24 years. There are currently 251 students on roll, aged 14 to 20 years. Of these, 16 students are of compulsory school age. Almost all students are from other countries, currently 44 countries, and speak English as an additional language. About a quarter of students come from China. There are no students with a statement of special educational needs or on the special educational needs register. Most students go on to university in the United Kingdom. The college is one of three CATS colleges in England that are managed by Cambridge Education Group. It opened in September 2011 and aims to enable students to achieve beyond their expectations through consistent, high standards of learning, and pastoral and welfare support. This is the first inspection of the college. The boarding accommodation was inspected in March 2012. A monitoring visit, to evaluate the progress being made on the recommendations of the boarding inspection, took place at the same time as the college inspection. Its findings are reported separately.

## **Evaluation of the college**

CATS College London has established itself well in its first year and provides a good quality of education. The good curriculum underpins a good quality of teaching that in turn enables students to make good progress. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory rather than good, as more needs to be done to extend its breadth. Behaviour is good and students are supported very well by their senior tutors. Safeguarding and the provision for students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory rather than good, as parts of three regulations are not met. Regulations relating to all other parts of the inspection are met.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is good because it meets students' needs. All students have a personalised learning plan and are placed on the most appropriate course to meet their aspirations for entry to university. This is due to the college's effective careers

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

guidance. The personal, social and health education programme focuses on preparation for university, with units such as critical thinking. It reflects the college's aims and ethos. Students are screened for specific learning difficulty on entry to the college and given appropriate support if required.

The curriculum policy is supported by appropriate schemes of work and curriculum directors make sure that it is implemented effectively. The schemes vary in quality, but most promote good progress. Students of compulsory school age mainly take a pre-programme leading to five IGCSEs in English as a second language, dual science, mathematics, and business studies. Additional subjects include art, drama, music, photography, physical education, history, geography, computing and personal, social and health education. Examinations are not taken in these subjects. Students may study a course in English only, the Academic English Module, for up to a year. The college offers a good range of A-level subjects for the traditional AS- and A-level course, or for a one year fast track A level. It also offers a university foundation programme. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as computing, chess, UCAS, choir, foreign languages film club, public speaking, craft/textiles, debating society, drama club, cookery and a range of sport.

Teaching and assessment are good in the majority of lessons and promote students' good progress. They are particularly good in A-level courses and the university foundation programme where students have clear predicted target grades that teachers use in planning lessons. In these courses, students' progress is assessed regularly and monitored by curriculum directors through an online progress tracking system. This practice is effective in enabling teachers to identify any support or extension work needed for individuals. Students of compulsory school age are not always aware of their targets or what individual levels of work to aim for, so progress at this stage is more variable. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements. Questionnaires completed by staff indicate that teachers feel well supported by performance management and professional development opportunities, and this is reflected in the college development plan.

The most effective lessons are focused on promoting the progress of each student towards learning objectives that set high expectations. Teachers constantly assess each student's progress during the lesson and adapt the activities to address misconceptions or to accelerate the learning, so that no time is lost. Through skilful questioning they challenge students to think and learn for themselves. Students use a variety of activities and resources to develop their independence in learning and their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, in a sociology lesson, students challenged each other in small groups to extend their argument for or against a functionalist view of education. In a fine art lesson, students applied independent learning skills such as project planning, research, and written and sketched notes to compare the techniques of various artists. Detailed written comments in marking help students to know how to improve their work.

In a minority of lessons, teaching and assessment are satisfactory rather than good and promote students' satisfactory progress. These lessons tend to be in the courses where targets are not used to plan for individual students. The class is taught as a whole, with limited adjustments to accommodate the varying levels of knowledge,

understanding and skills of the students. Much of the time is spent on the teacher explaining and then asking questions of the whole class, which does not challenge students to think and learn independently or accelerate the learning for more-able students. There are few strategies to help students to access the language of the resources.

Overall, students make good progress. Their progress is particularly good in A-level courses and in the university foundation programme, enabling most students to progress to university. Progress in other courses, especially in humanities subjects, is often impeded by an early stage of learning to speak English. The college makes good provision to help students to develop their skills in English and to access the curriculum to address the variability in their achievement.

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and their behaviour is good. Students are eager to learn. They say that they enjoy their education. The college prepares them well for their chosen university courses and future economic well-being. Students develop their interests and self-knowledge through engaging in a range of extra-curricular activities. Strong friendships between students, together with positive working relationships with staff, help to boost their self-esteem and their confidence to contribute to lessons, even when they struggle to articulate their ideas in English.

In lessons such as government and politics, sociology, business ethics and personal, social and health education, students are encouraged to reflect on moral issues, to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law. Their behaviour is good and attendance is improving, due to the support from senior tutors. Students value their senior tutors greatly. They feel the tutors know them well. Students make positive suggestions to improve their college experience through the student council, though their contribution to community life is limited. Their knowledge of public institutions and services in England is developed through personal, social and health education, and in subjects such as politics, but it tends to be limited to the law and government. Students get on noticeably well together and show respect for each other's cultures. They write articles about their cultural traditions for the college magazine and participate in some celebrations, such as the Chinese New Year. However, the college is not making full use of the rich variety of cultures within the college to develop a breadth of understanding.

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

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is satisfactory. The child protection policy and procedures meet requirements and all staff, including designated child protection officers, have attended training at the right levels. Appropriate recruitment procedures have been followed, with the exception that references have not been taken up for a few support staff. Relevant staff are now booked onto training in safer recruitment procedures. Students say that they feel

very safe in the college and this is confirmed by the few parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The college has suitable arrangements in place to ensure the safety of students who attend courses off site at The School of English, which is adjacent to the college.

The behaviour policy and procedures meet requirements. Any incidents are recorded by staff on the online system and followed up promptly by senior tutors. Sanctions are carried out effectively, resulting in few students being excluded. Students say that incidents of bullying are rare and that they are confident to speak with senior tutors about any concerns. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory, although accidents are not logged immediately or dietary needs shared promptly with all relevant staff. Meals are nutritious and healthy, but not always popular with the students. Students are aware of the importance of keeping healthy and students of compulsory school age engage regularly in physical exercise. Suitable risk assessments are in place, including for educational visits and fire safety. Several staff, including all science teachers, are trained in first aid. The college nurse manages the nurse's station and medical room well.

The college has improved the supervision of students of compulsory school age when travelling between college and the boarding house, but not during break and lunchtimes when students often go off site. Attendance registers are taken online for every lesson. They are monitored regularly by senior tutors who follow up any absence immediately. As a result, attendance is improving, and is satisfactory. The admission register is online and printed out regularly. It does not include all the required details. The college's three year accessibility plan meets requirements to make reasonable adjustments for any potential disabled students.

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

All the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with young people, including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, have been carried out and recorded appropriately in a single central register.

## **Premises and accommodation at the college**

The college is housed in a terrace of three exceptionally well-maintained and secure Regency buildings in Central London, with access to extensive educational and cultural amenities. All classrooms are well equipped with up-to-date technology. Suitable specialist facilities include science laboratories, an art room, photography room with dark room, library and e-library, and two computer suites. Nutritious meals are prepared and served on site and the college has its own coffee bar. While there is no outside space, students make effective use of the gardens in the square opposite the college, and of a local gymnasium. All regulatory requirements for the premises and accommodation are met.

## **Provision of information**

The college provides, or makes available, all of the required information for parents, carers and others. The information is clear, accurate and up-to-date, although not easy to locate on the college website.

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

The complaints procedures meet regulatory requirements.

## **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>3</sup>

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

- make arrangements for safeguarding students with regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, specifically with regard to the safer recruitment requirements of obtaining two references for all staff (paragraph 7)
- deploy college staff in such a way as to ensure the proper supervision of students of compulsory school age at break and lunchtimes (paragraph 15)
- maintain the admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, specifically with regard to including contact telephone numbers for parents and carers and destinations of students (paragraph 17).

## **What the college could do to improve further**

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

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
  - making sure that all teachers constantly assess and develop the understanding of each student during lessons
  - developing students' independent learning skills, including literacy and numeracy skills, across all subjects.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made).

- Increase the opportunities to develop students' awareness of the broad range of cultural opportunities within the college and in London, and of public institutions and services in England.



## 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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## College details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	International		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2011		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–24 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 137	Girls: 114	Total: 251
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 92	Girls: 84	Total: 176
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£25,950		
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£35,625		
<b>Address of school</b>	43–45 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2RA		
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 78411580		
<b>Email address</b>	mlove@catslondon.com		
<b>Principal</b>	Mark Love		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cambridge Education Group Limited		

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



23 November 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of** CATS College, London WC1A 2RA

Thank you for the support you gave to the inspectors when we inspected your college recently, especially those of you who met us over lunch. We enjoyed seeing you at work. The following is what we found.

You told us that your college gives you a good quality of education and we agree. The good range of subjects you study and the good quality of teaching help you to make good progress and go on to university. You also told us how much you value your senior tutors. They know you well and give you good support. Your behaviour is good and your attendance is improving. Your personal development is satisfactory. We judged the college's provision for your safeguarding, welfare, health and safety as satisfactory rather than good as there are some parts that the college must address to comply with statutory requirements. All other parts of the inspection meet the requirements.

In addition to the few regulations that must be met, we have recommended two areas for the college to improve. One is to make sure that even more lessons are good and outstanding by helping all teachers to constantly assess and develop your progress during lessons, and to develop your independent learning skills. This means skills such as researching, problem solving, investigating, discussing and presenting your findings. The other area is to improve your personal development by helping you to learn more about each other's cultures, about London and the public institutions and services in England.

You can help by making sure that you attend all your lessons and by monitoring your own progress towards your targets. If you do not have any targets, ask your teacher for them. I wish you success in your college courses, at university and in the future.

Yours sincerely  
Sue Frater  
Her Majesty's Inspector