

# Padworth College

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	869/6009
Unique Reference Number	110169
Inspection number	296856
Inspection dates	20-21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Richardson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the college

Padworth College opened in a rural setting near Reading in 1963. The college's aim is to create a happy and secure environment with an atmosphere which is relaxed and yet purposeful, where the needs of the individual are recognised and respected. Padworth is distinctive in a number of respects. There is no uniform, all members of the college community are known by their first names, and rules are kept to the necessary minimum for a residential community. Students aged 13 to 19 come to Padworth from the United Kingdom (UK) and all over the world, and a large proportion are boarders in college term time. For around two thirds of the students English is not their principal language. There is a strong expectation that they are at the college both to achieve their academic potential and to develop into confident, responsible and independent young adults by the time they move on to university. This is the first time that the college has been inspected by Ofsted.

## Evaluation of the college

The quality of education provided by Padworth College is good. The curriculum offered allows students to select courses from a good range of subjects and to be supported in their acquisition of English. Teaching is good and students make good progress. The ways the students are taught, and the range of extra-curricular activities offered, provide opportunities for good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is satisfactory and it meets the national minimum standards for welfare in residential settings. However, the college does not comply with several regulations.

## Quality of education

Curriculum provision is good, and meets the needs of students of different ages and aptitudes. There is good provision for basic skills and a strong focus on courses leading to public examinations. The intake of the college has changed in recent years and the curriculum has developed appropriately to take account of the needs of younger students, male students and local day students. Nevertheless, the design of the curriculum is still dictated to a large extent by provision for a high proportion of international students for whom English is an additional language, and who come to the college to improve their English and prepare for higher education in the UK. The students' lack of experience of a UK-style curriculum means that the college tries to be flexible in allowing students, particularly in the AS year, to try out courses from

which they eventually make longer-term choices. The college provides good advice to students on their progression routes through to higher education in the UK. A number of international students take GCSE in one year, although the majority of students now follow a two-year GCSE course. The college makes good use of small group sizes and flexibility of access to staff within the timetable to meet students' curriculum needs.

Careers guidance is satisfactory, strongly focused on higher education routes, with good support for university applications. The college provision of more general careers education is less well developed, particularly in the light of the changed profile of student admissions. An attempt at arranging work experience last year was not successful, and although the college has made contact with the local Connexions service, nothing further has been done. Provision for personal, social and health education is integral to the curriculum and is unsatisfactory, and there is no specific programme to cover these aspects of education. The college provides a good range of out of college hours activities which students enjoy.

Teaching shows good specialist knowledge, for example, in law, business studies, mathematics, and science. The very small classes result in focused teaching, often one to one, and this has a positive impact on students' learning through the good levels of challenge and guidance that teachers consistently provide in lessons. For example, care is taken over the level of language used by the teacher, acknowledging language difficulties, questions are framed to engage and challenge students and teaching gives focused guidance on examination mark schemes. Relationships are good in lessons, helping students' motivation, and humour is used constructively to enhance the impact of teaching. Teachers use examples of real-life situations to illustrate their teaching, although not all examples which draw on everyday life in the UK are understood by students from other countries, and they do not often draw on parallels from students' own cultures. Where teaching is satisfactory, the teachers' subject knowledge is secure but not all students are prompted to engage or participate actively enough. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool is underdeveloped.

Assessment is satisfactory and has some good features. There are weekly testing sessions, and half-termly grading and comments on effort and attainment. In some subject areas, for example, science, the analysis of data on individual student progress is thorough and effective. The college is not able to fairly compare examination results with national norms because the ages at which students take examinations, are often not the conventional ages for English colleges. The college has good records of examination results, but not enough use is made of centralised data on students' progress, and the college is aware that this would help in the management of teaching and learning, and in accurately representing the college's provision and students' achievement.

Progress of students on their courses is good overall. In lessons they show progress that is at least satisfactory or better, with about half being good. The lessons are

well focused, with clear learning objectives. This, along with small, often one-to-one, teaching groups encourages progress. Students try hard, show respect for the learning needs of others and show high levels of engagement in their lessons. Participation in extra-curricular learning is good and results in progress in areas such as cultural awareness, business awareness and knowledge of the UK justice system.

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

Provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is good. That for their spiritual development is satisfactory. Students are mature, very courteous and demonstrate high levels of independence. They are very welcoming to visitors and enjoy their learning. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Attendance and punctuality at lessons are good. Behaviour in and out of lessons is good. The rare exclusions demonstrate that the college will not tolerate extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour and rules are applied fairly.

Students acquire rapidly the essential skills they need for their future lives as young adults and for further studies. However, some lack confidence and a tendency to stick together in ethnic groups hinders some in making full use of the opportunity to practise their English and develop as self-confident young people. The college is aware of this and is taking steps to ensure that students are well integrated. The college also recognises the need to promote spiritual development, so that there are more opportunities for students to reflect upon their own spirituality and other faiths. The lack of a comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship programme limits opportunities for staff and students to consider these matters.

Students' cultural development is extended well through work in lessons and visits to places of interest. Specific activities, such as celebrations of different countries' New Year and English visitors to the college, develop students' appreciation of the many cultures represented at the college as well as English customs and traditions. Students comment upon some enjoyable events, such as the international evening and recreational activities at weekends. There are increased opportunities for students to take responsibility and to contribute to improving provision at the college. Students commented on positive changes they have seen this year, such as the re-kindled activity of the college council. However, students still have limited real influence on decisions which affect them and the college is aware of the need to promote students' contribution to the college community and ensure that all have a voice.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Some key policies have gaps and there is no overarching policy on health and safety. The college is in the process of reviewing its suite of policies concerned with health and safety. There is some good health and safety practice, for example, risk assessments

are carried out for a range of staff and activities that are part of their role, and these are well recorded. The college also ensures that risk assessments for students are completed and approved before activities outside college take place.

The informal environment of the college, one of its distinctive features, does not lead to a lax attitude to the safeguarding of students. Staff are present and vigilant around the buildings. They mix well with students and provide supervision in a constructive way that leads to good relationships between staff and students. The students used the inspection questionnaire and interviews to express their feelings that welfare and health are, on the whole, good or better. A significant minority of students said that the college did not provide them with sufficient opportunities to take exercise, or help them to make healthy choices concerning what to eat and drink. The college catering staff provide a good range of food which provides plenty of opportunities to select healthy meals. Students also feel safe and well cared for. However, there were some specific concerns over incidents of petty theft expressed by the boys, which the college has resolved through the provision of personal safes. There is a marked difference in the arrangements for privacy for males and females, with the girls acknowledging that they have significantly better conditions in the boarding accommodation. The college is aware of these differences.

There are currently no students with disabilities at the college. There is not a plan to improve access to the buildings for those with physical disabilities. Thus the college is not complying with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The college does not meet all the requirements regarding the suitability of staff. The college does not yet ensure that staff are not appointed until CRB checks are completed. A small number of staff in post were appointed before CRB checks were complete. Procedures for appointing staff are otherwise appropriate and rightly involve the taking up professional references and checking qualifications. Checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for the suitability of staff to work with children are now carried out for all staff employed in the college. Long-serving members of staff have not been checked in this way, although there is discussion of changing college employment policies to make this a requirement.

### College's premises and accommodation

The college is housed in a range of buildings of different ages located around the main college, a listed building, substantially Georgian, but incorporating older structures. The college houses boys' boarding accommodation and several teaching rooms and some administrative offices. The recently erected buildings contain girls' boarding accommodation and teaching rooms, which include specialist subject areas. There is good accommodation for teaching the separate sciences and art. There are sufficient computers in the ICT room.

There is some recent storm damage that has allowed penetration by rain, otherwise the building does not show significant dilapidation. Teaching areas and boarding accommodation show a range of standards of decoration. On the whole, the state of decoration is satisfactory. However, in some boarding accommodation the quality of decoration and the limited personalisation reduce how comfortable students feel. The girls' accommodation is substantially better than the boys' in terms of social areas and access to toilets and washing facilities. The charging of students to wash their own clothes was raised in the last inspection report from the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The report suggested that students should be informed at recruitment of these charges but this has not been done.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The college sends out appropriate materials to inform parents and prospective parents of the college's ethos, aims, policies and their right to request particular documentation. Recent amendments to this information have resulted in only two regulations not being met. The college does not inform parents that they can request the details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the previous college year. The college does not provide the required contact details for the proprietor.

### Procedures for handling complaints

There is a policy for handling complaints which parents and prospective parents are informed they may request. The procedures comply with all but one regulation. The policy does not make clear that, where relevant, the person complained about should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

The college meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos (paragraph 1(2)(f)).

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

- have regard to the DfES guidance *Health and safety: responsibilities and powers* (paragraph 3(4)).

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- ensure that, prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, they have been subject to a check with the CRB to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)).

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide parents and prospective parents with the proprietor's full name, address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which he may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b)).
- ensure that parents are aware they can request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the complaints policy makes clear that, where relevant, the person complained about should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the college should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- improving the access to and use of ICT by students both in lessons and in personal studies.
- introducing centralised collection of data on students' progress to help in the management of teaching and learning, and in accurately representing the college's provision and students' achievement.



## School details

Name of school	Padworth College		
DfES number	869/6009		
Unique reference number	110169		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1963		
Age range of pupils	13 - 19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 41	Girls: 54	Total: 95
Number of boarders	Boys: 30	Girls: 47	Total: 77
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,800		
Annual fees (boarders)	£18,600		
Address of school	Padworth Reading Berkshire RG7 4NR		
Telephone number	0118983 2644		
Fax number	01734834515		
Email address	principal@padworth.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Linde Melhuish		
Proprietor	Mr Guy Wilson		
Reporting inspector	Ian Richardson HMI		
Dates of inspection	20-21 March 2007		