

Bellerbys College

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	203/6376
Unique Reference Number	134827
Inspection number	316913
Inspection dates	6-7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley 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).

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the college

Bellerbys College in Greenwich is part of StudyGroup, which owns four colleges throughout the country with the same name and same proprietor. This college was established in 1997 and moved to the current premises in 2004. There are 281 students, including nine students of compulsory school age. All students are from overseas representing 37 nationalities. Most students come from China, Hong Kong, Russia and former Soviet Union countries. The college is non-selective, although in order to gain a place, students are required to achieve minimum standards in English and in academic studies in their own country. Approximately 70% of students are resident, either at the McMillan Student Village, which is on the same site as the college, or in Homestay accommodation with host families. Most students complete their studies in one year and the aim of the college is to prepare them for admission to British universities. The college's provision for care of students was inspected by the Ofsted's Children's Directorate in February 2005.

Evaluation of the college

The college provides a good education and satisfactory care for its students. Good teaching and a good curriculum enable the students to achieve well and this ensures entry to university. The curriculum for the small minority of students who are of compulsory school age is too restricted. Staff know the students very well and they receive good personal care and attention on a daily basis. However, the provision for students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory rather than good because policies and procedures do not always reflect current practice and some do not meet the regulations. Appropriate action has been taken to address most of the recommendations from the Children's Directorate report especially in relation to opportunities for activities in the evenings and at weekends.

Quality of education

A good curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of the majority of students, enabling them to successfully progress towards university entrance. Most students enrol on one of the Bellerbys Foundation courses and these, together with the Bellerbys Academic English Language Preparation Programme (ELPP), provide students with the best possible opportunities of obtaining places in more than 40 partner universities. The curriculum for business management and allied courses is good. The college also offers an appropriate range of one-year GCSE courses, and A-

levels that are completed in two years. The syllabus for each course is tightly structured around well chosen text books. The ELPP curriculum provides students with staged acquisition of English language skills and these courses are usually completed in one or two terms. There is a good balance of basic language skills built into the programmes of study for subjects other than English and this enables students to improve their proficiency as measured by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

The students of compulsory school age do not take part in physical, aesthetic or creative aspects of education, during college time. Although this is compensated for to some extent by an outstanding programme of enrichment activities such as playing basketball at a local venue, the regulations for this small group of students are not fully met. Similarly, there are several students for whom the only subject studied during the college day is English.

The students agree that opportunities to take responsibility are good. They run a popular and well-attended debating society, organise charity events and suggest visits to places of interest such as London's Lord Mayor's Show. The college does not yet implement a fully structured programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), including citizenship and this regulation is not met.

The quality of teaching at the college is good. Class groups are set according to proficiency in English and teachers have a good understanding of the language needs of students. There is a high expectation for active participation and teachers use students' contributions well to correct misconceptions, suggest alternatives and extend thinking. As a result, students gain confidence and improve academic and language skills. Lessons can be up to three hours long. This generally works well because teachers plan tightly structured lessons with a series of short, varied and imaginative activities to maintain concentration and sustain interest. Most teaching groups are small enough to ensure personal attention to develop students' skills and to use individual questioning to challenge thinking. In larger groups and in some other lessons the development of skills is not well thought through and there are not enough planned opportunities for students to develop their knowledge and understanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge but do not always tailor the schemes of work sufficiently to the students' needs and interests. The setting of homework makes a strong contribution to students' learning because of its high profile in residences and in the way in which it is used as a springboard for learning in the following lesson.

Assessment is good because students are confident that they know how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve further. Teachers assess course work regularly and this, together with end of unit tests gives college staff accurate information to track students' attainment. Over 90% of students go on to study at a British university after one year at the college and this represents good progress. Many students achieve beyond the expected IELTS scores and course pass grades.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

This aspect of the college's work is good overall. The college makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual and moral development and provision for their social and cultural development is good. The students' behaviour is good although lateness to lessons is a problem in a few instances. The attendance of a minority of students is poor but most students, including those of compulsory school age, attend well. Overall, students are hard-working, courteous and friendly. The students say that they enjoy the college, have good relationships with teachers and residential staff and feel able to approach the principal or academic director when necessary. They feel their views, as expressed through the student panel, are listened to and acted upon.

The students have a well developed social conscience as illustrated by their outstanding work in raising money to build a school each year in underdeveloped countries. Their knowledge of public institutions and services in England is limited due to a lack of a planned programme for citizenship and PSHE. Opportunities to socialise are varied and extensive. There is a choice of activities for each day of the week and the academic year concludes with the Annual Ball. The students enjoy celebratory evenings where they experience the customs and practices of different cultures.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students and staff is satisfactory. The students value the help that they are given to make progress and gain university places. They say that they feel safe and have good access to staff who give them support on a range of personal and academic issues. Senior staff and tutors get to know the students quickly and build trusting relationships through regular contact, especially during their first few months away from home. Induction procedures are well established and give students the important information and guidance that they need on arrival. The college counsellor meets with groups of students who may require a little more help in understanding the procedures. The students report that they do not get enough advice on healthy lifestyles and have insufficient opportunities for physical exercise. Some students smoke just outside the building and although this is permitted by the owners of the campus, the college does not discourage smoking actively enough.

Despite the college's strengths in student welfare and support there are weaknesses in some of the required policies and procedures. The designated member of staff for child protection has had the required training but other staff have not. The policy is not sufficiently detailed to give staff clear guidelines for what to do when they are concerned or how to be vigilant for potential problems. This regulation is not met. The first aid policy does not meet the regulations because it does not give enough information about what to do in a range of emergency situations. The college has an access policy but there is no long term action plan in place as required by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The college does not meet the regulations for the procedures required for the recruitment of staff. Checks to confirm medical fitness are not carried out, there are no Criminal records Bureau (CRB) checks for members of the proprietorial body and the single central register of staff is not sufficiently detailed. All members of staff have a current enhanced check from the CRB.

College's premises and accommodation

The quality of the college's premises and residential accommodation is good. This purpose built, modern and well maintained building is a pleasant environment in which to teach and learn. The size and number of classrooms are adequate for the number of students on roll. There are two science laboratories and a well stocked library. Areas for socialising are limited to the canteen, although each residential block has a small common room. There is a dedicated medical room for students who fall ill during the day and an adequate number of toilets. Outdoor communal areas are very small and although there are no facilities for physical recreational activities on-site the college makes use of facilities in the local area.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The company brochure gives good general information on Bellerbys colleges across the country. The welcome pack, including a very good pocket-size handbook, gives students and their families a range of good information about this particular college. All regulations are met with the exception of the availability of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints received. The college is in regular contact with the students' parents and carers, often through agents in their country of origin. Reports giving useful information on progress, attainment, attendance and attitudes towards learning are emailed and posted twice each term.

Procedures for handling complaints

The policy for dealing with complaints does not meet requirements. It does not outline the procedures sufficiently.

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:

- give students of compulsory school age planned experiences of physical, aesthetic and creative areas of learning (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- provide personal, social and health education (paragraph 1(2)(f)).

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)).

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

- improve the written policy for child protection and ensure that all staff undertake the required training in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- improve the written policy on first aid (paragraph 3(6)).

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

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff (including volunteers), carry out checks to confirm their medical fitness (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that the proprietor has checked the other members of the proprietorial body to confirm their identity, right to work in the UK, enhanced CRB check, or where appropriate confirmation that he/she does not contravene section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) (paragraph 4(B)(4 and 5))
- establish a single central register of staff to show checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of: his/her identity; qualifications (where required); whether an enhanced CRB check was obtained, or where appropriate, that he/she is not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (List 99); the right to work in the UK and, where relevant for those who have lived outside the UK, suitability to work in a school, including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(2 to 7) and 4C(9)).

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

- provide details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with 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 procedure is available on request to parents of students and prospective students (paragraph 7(b))
- ensure that the complaints procedure sets out clear timescales for the management of the complaint (paragraph 7(c))
- ensure that the complaints procedure allows for complaints to be made and considered initially on an informal basis (paragraph 7(d))
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for a formal complaint to be made in writing if parents are not satisfied with the response to an informal complaint (paragraph 7(e))
- ensure that if the parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint there is provision for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f))
- ensure that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint there is provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the college (paragraph 7(g))
- ensure that the procedure allows for parents to attend the panel hearing, and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h))
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and that the procedure stipulates that the complainant, proprietors and principal, and, where relevant, the person complained about, should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
- ensure that the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
- ensure that the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

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

College details

Name of school	Bellerbys College		
DCSF number	203/6376		
Unique reference number	134827		
Type of school	Further education tutorial college		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	14-25 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 159	Girls: 122	Total: 281
Number of boarders	Boys: 108	Girls: 88	Total: 196
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,990 - £14,280		
Annual fees (boarders)	£15,640 - £21,860		
Address of school	Bounty House Stowage London SE8 3DE		
Telephone number	02086947008		
Fax number	02086947001		
Email address	plangman@studygroup.com		
Headteacher	Mr P Langman		
Proprietor	Bellerbys Educational Services		
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI		
Dates of inspection	6-7 November 2007		