

Bellerbys College

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	846/6009
Unique Reference Number	114664
Inspection number	316915
Inspection dates	8-9 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Neville Grenyer AI

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

Information about the school

Bellerbys College is an independent secondary school and tutorial college for students aged between 14 and 19. Founded as Davies College in 1959, and registered under its present name in 1990, it is located in central Brighton. It moved to its newly purpose-built premises just over a week before this inspection; the teaching accommodation is adjacent to the residential building, but some students are housed with host families in the town. The college provides pre-GCSE, GCSE, and GCE A level courses for students from overseas. It also provides foundation courses for a number of universities on the same campus and business degree and pre-masters programmes. It has 94 pupils of compulsory school age and a further 542 students above that age. The school was last inspected in 2002.

Evaluation of the school

Bellerbys College provides a good quality of education; it provides a good curriculum, good teaching and the quality of its assessment is outstanding. It meets its aims very well for the vast majority of its students, who make good progress. A particular strength is the development by students of a respect for their own and for other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony. The purpose-built accommodation is outstanding. The behaviour of students is good, and the provision for their welfare, health and safety is satisfactory.

Quality of education

The college offers a good curriculum. A wide range of courses provides for the needs of all students. Emphasis is placed on students acquiring the skills needed for further study with a course in English as an additional language. The curriculum for pre-GCSE pupils is appropriate, and pupils can fairly quickly move on to GCSE courses in art, biology, business studies, chemistry, combined sciences, information and communication technology (ICT), economics, English, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages or physics. There is a very good course in key skills for A-level students, providing many of the features of a personal and social education course. The range of A levels available is particularly wide and includes accountancy, ancient history, archaeology, art, biology, business studies, chemistry, computing, economics, English Literature, further mathematics, geography, graphic design, history, history of art, Latin, law, mathematics, modern foreign languages,

philosophy, photography, physics, psychology and sociology. A good range of visits and extra-curricular activities, for example sporting events, is arranged, although students have asked for these to happen more frequently. Schemes of work for most courses are excellent and work plans are well-matched to the needs of all students. Coverage of personal, social and health education, together with careers, is not as well developed as other aspects of the curriculum. The curriculum, extra-curricular activities, both sporting and cultural, and the whole college experience give students opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life that prepare them well for the future. Over 90% of the students go on to university.

Teaching is good. Eleven lessons were seen, mostly well-planned and taught effectively by teachers with appropriate expertise. The schemes of work provide good and effective support when teachers are absent, as was seen in one lesson where another member of staff stepped in and took the lesson very readily. Teachers often teach with infectious enthusiasm, as in a lesson observed on elastic potential energy. Students enjoyed very much working in pairs, demonstrating very effectively a spirit of international cooperation. Teachers know their students very well and can predict their strengths and weaknesses as, for example, in an ICT lesson. The class teacher predicted very accurately how students would set about their work.

The quality of assessment is outstanding; work is marked with particularly helpful comments and targets are set in a very precise manner. The schemes of work all have good sections on assessment which are very well implemented. Assessment is regular and there is a very good system of central recording; the programme managers use this information to make decisions about the students' next stages of learning. This makes a direct contribution to their good progress overall.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students develop their self-knowledge and self-esteem through many of the learning activities, especially where they can see for themselves that they are making good progress. In their questionnaires, the great majority of students say that they enjoy their education here. Their behaviour is good and attendance is very good indeed. For the majority of school aged students the key skills course is a main provider of developing self-confidence in their studies. The students' handbooks, together with the induction course, give a good introduction to English laws that they may encounter, along with English customs which it may help them to know about. There are some strong citizenship elements in history, and in economics and business education. The student councils do not feature much yet in most of the students' perceptions, as shown in the replies to the questionnaires. Students say that they would appreciate more opportunities to meet those who are on different courses. Nevertheless, one of the college's greatest strengths in the cultural development of its students is the successful encouragement of those from different cultures and countries to have an

appreciation of their own and other cultures, and to promote tolerance and harmony between their different cultural traditions.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for the students' overall welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Students say that they feel safe in the college, which has a well-implemented anti-bullying policy. The college has produced a good child protection policy in line with current requirements, but there is a need to disseminate up-to-date training in this to all care staff. There is a very good discipline policy which is implemented well. Each student has a care plan which is frequently reviewed by the tutors.

The college residential arrangements on site meet the minimum boarding standards but host family placements were not visited during the inspection. There are no outstanding recommendations from the last inspection except that the college still has difficulty ensuring that students' medical records are forwarded to it before the students arrive. There is a very good and well implemented first aid plan and the first aid box in the office was well equipped, but lacked a checklist with dates to show when it is due for the next check. The location of first aid boxes is clearly shown on each floor of the building and in laboratories. There is a good level of fire safety, with a good temporary risk assessment in place while building work on neighbouring premises makes the main plan inoperative. The current plan, approved by the local fire officer, is to assemble in the neighbouring Brighton station car park. The college holds frequent fire drills which are well recorded and evaluated.

The student database keeps clear records of any severe disciplinary offences and of communication with parents. There have been no exclusions in the last year. There is a good system for keeping the admission and attendance registers in line with current requirements and attendance levels are very good indeed. The current new building is the fruit of the college's last plan in respect of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, in which it fulfils its responsibilities; evaluation is the next planned stage of the process.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The college has established appropriate safeguards to ensure that students do not encounter unsuitable adults. Staffing and recruitment procedures are appropriately informed by, and conform to, the most recent guidance, including the maintenance of a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The college has just moved into outstanding, purpose-built, new accommodation which provides a modern university-like environment and supports effective learning.

Classrooms are of suitable size and number for the current size of the college and there are good common rooms, a good library, a prayer room, a new medical centre and a good food hall. Students are accommodated in single en suite bedrooms and rooms for disabled students are also available. A very useful feature of the residence is that students of different age groups are on each floor with the youngest on the top floor; each floor has two supervisors and a residential common room. The college makes use of nearby sporting facilities, but does not offer recreational sport or exercise every day. There is a laundry but the students say that they would value more ironing facilities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The college provides good information for parents and the prospectus and the information pack together meet all the statutory requirements. Inevitably when so many parents live so far away there are some difficulties with communication, but the school generally uses emails well. Although a few parents mentioned a problem with the email system, the wireless email connections had been restored by the end of the inspection. Linked to the outstanding assessment system, there is a very good system for reporting students' progress and attainment to parents.

Procedures for handling complaints

The college meets all the requirements for handling formal and informal complaints. It had not received any formal written complaints in the last year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The college meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- improve students' access to daily recreational and informal sporting activities
- increase opportunities for students to meet other students who are not on the same courses
- ensure that the up-to-date child protection training is disseminated to all care staff
- develop more detailed schemes of work for personal and social, and careers education to ensure an organised and more coherent programme.

College details

Name of college	Bellerbys College		
DCSF number	846/6009		
Unique reference number	114664		
Type of college	Secondary school and tutorial college		
Status	Independent		
Date college opened	1959		
Age range of students	14-19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 362	Girls: 274	Total: 636
Number of boarders	Boys: 301	Girls: 234	Total: 535
Annual fees (day students)	£6,600-£13,800		
Annual fees (boarders)	£9,900-£21,900		
Address of school	1 Billinton Way		
	Brighton		
	East Sussex		
	BN1 4LF		
Telephone number	01273 339200		
Fax number	01273 339201		
Email address	naddison@studygroup.com		
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Addison		
Proprietor	CHAMPS (Australia)		
Reporting inspector	Neville Grenyer AI		
Dates of inspection	8-9 November 2007		