

Duff Miller College

Independent Tutorial College

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	207/6262
Unique Reference Number	100526
Inspection number	322017
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell

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 college

The college, which is privately owned, has been established on its present site in South Kensington since 1982 in a listed mid-Victorian building. Registered for students between the ages of 14 and 19+, it currently caters for 182 male and female students aged from 15 to 19+. Thirteen of the present students are of compulsory school age and studying courses leading to GCSE examinations. There are no students with statements of special educational need, although the college recognises that some students need additional support for minor learning difficulties relating to dyslexia. *'The college aims to provide an open and supportive atmosphere which encourages students to develop on both academic and personal levels. The college empathises that its special characteristic 'is the small class sizes and close student-teacher relationship which helps every student reach their full potential'.* It provides additional focussed support for students looking for places in the medical sciences'. The college is accredited by the British Accreditation Council (BAC) and was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2004.

Evaluation of the college

Duff Miller College provides a good quality of education and effectively meets its aims. Students of all ages develop a positive attitude to learning and make good progress that is supported by effective teaching. Most achieve well in public examinations. Through effective strategies that support students' academic and personal development, they are well prepared to pursue a range of pathways in their future education. Students appreciate the good care and support that they receive from the college, from individual staff and through the tutorial system. The vast majority say that they are pleased to be at the college and the minority of parents that responded to a pre-inspection questionnaire agree. The college has made good progress since its last inspection by Ofsted and now meets all but two of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum provision is good. It is supported by a clear curriculum policy, the detail of which is set out effectively in individual documents dealing with each course provided. The curriculum policy is supported by very effective course planning by teachers, supported by other documentation and schemes of work. Whilst meeting the requirement, the college provides limited guidance on their

expectations for schemes of work and this results in some lack of consistency in the detail of support documentation provided by individual subjects. All students attend the college on a full-time basis except for a small minority. Students of all ages can choose from a very wide range of subjects and the college is able to respond flexibly to the requirements and aspirations of most applicants. The college provides one year courses at GCSE and one and two year advanced level (AS and A2) courses. A substantial number of advanced level students take a course which is structured to provide a specialist focus to support their entry to university to study the medical sciences. In addition the college provides short retake and revision courses. A number of students in all types of course enter the college to improve grades in examinations taken previously.

The college makes suitable provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) for younger students, which includes an element of careers education. The nature of careers education reflects the aims of all students to either proceed to other schools to continue their studies or, in the case of the majority, to obtain places at universities of their choice. Opportunity for sport is provided for students below the age of 16 at a local sports centre. The provision of a separate tutor group for younger students enables support for their particular needs to be focused appropriately. The college provides a reasonable number of annual events and activities within its aims, but students say that they would like more.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and provide effective support for the good progress made by students of all abilities. Teaching is never less than good and much of it demonstrates outstanding features. Its effectiveness supports the positive learning atmosphere seen throughout the college. Teachers show outstanding subject knowledge and in general show a passion for their subjects, which infectiously draws the interest of students of all ages and abilities. Students frequently say that they are aware of the progress that they have made compared to their previous levels of attainment. Teachers know their students well and overall address their learning needs effectively, supported by the small size of most teaching groups. Additional support is thoughtfully provided for students who may require help to overcome minor learning difficulties, including during their advanced level courses. Students say that the support provided by the college often extends to the use of email out of college to provide help and support for their work and to respond to their questions.

Teachers are effective in, wherever possible, relating aspects of their subjects to other areas of students' educational experience. Discussion in classes and particularly in those instances where questioning is used most effectively, challenges students to think independently. In the best lessons the strength of debate prepares students effectively for future higher education. Resources are sufficient for most classes, but younger students say that they sometimes do not have an appropriate text book and that they would like more opportunities for practical experiments in science.

The framework and structures that support assessment are good and valued by students who appreciate the value of guidance and feedback received from their

tutors. Discussions with students show that they appreciate the ongoing feedback that they receive about their work and that they are made aware of what they need to do to improve their levels of attainment. Assessment is effective in practice because feedback is regular, supported by ongoing face to face discussions between the students and their subject teachers and their pastoral tutors. Teachers generally keep suitable written records of students' progress in subjects and there are outstanding examples of these being effectively used by individual teachers as part of their strategies for supporting students' progress. Assessment is supported by regular testing and examinations which prepare students effectively for taking examinations. Students agree that the regular testing is very helpful in developing their confidence, as well as reinforcing their knowledge and understanding.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory overall, although it has a number of strong features. The college effectively raises the self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence of most students, because it successfully helps them to improve their academic performance and to gain confidence in their own ability to succeed. Consequently it prepares them well for their future well being. Students say that they are pleased to be at the college. The college expects all students to adopt a mature attitude to learning and, where necessary, to face reasons for previous weak academic performance. The support provided by staff is a key feature in enabling most students to make good progress. Students appreciate the help provided by staff. Behaviour is outstanding. Their mature behaviour is reflected in their positive relationships and a positive social atmosphere in the college. Students demonstrate knowledge of right and wrong, addressing many social and moral issues through subjects such as PSHE, religious education and sociology. However, whilst the college does meet the minimum regulation for students of compulsory school age to gain experience of and respect for the law and public institutions and services in England, it has not yet given sufficient thought to planning a regular programme of events.

Relationships within the college are outstanding between staff and students. The mostly British students, from a range of cultural heritages, enjoy notably positive relationships with one another. Subjects of the curriculum reinforce and promote students tolerance and respect for other cultures. Teaching effectively addresses issues of racism and religious belief in an atmosphere of openness and frankness. For example, through the study of 'Othello' in an English Literature class.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The college makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its students. A dedicated team of staff are committed to supporting students in developing their knowledge and understanding within a safe environment. Students say there is no bullying and they treat each other with respect. Relationships between staff and students are outstanding. Students are treated as adults and expected to take responsibility their own learning, though help is always available. High expectations

coupled with good attitudes to learning enables students to meet the challenges of examinations with confidence. Students are aware of healthy eating options and the need to take sufficient physical exercise, but do not always avail themselves of the opportunities. The college works closely with parents ensuring that regular reports go home. Policies and procedures are applied rigorously to ensure that students remain safe. The college has planned well to increase accessibility and will be drawing up a more detailed plan to review the possibility of further improving access in its listed buildings. The college meets nearly all the requirements with respect to welfare, but the admission register is incomplete. Although some information is supplied in electronic form, some admission dates are missing, and the dates that the students left the college have been omitted. The helpful students' handbook clearly sets out the college's policies relating to such issues as child-protection and bullying, and structures to support their academic and personal development.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The college fulfils its responsibilities in all respects by ensuring that new staff are appropriately checked with the Criminal Records Bureau prior to them taking up appointments. Records of all checks are maintained appropriately.

College's premises and accommodation

The college premises and accommodation are suitable in most respects and the college has addressed most of the issues raised at the last inspection by Ofsted. Overall, the college makes excellent use of the limited space, but it still does not provide suitable facilities for students who may be ill during the day. This is largely due to limited space. The college is aware of the need to address this situation, through the development of additional usable space that has recently become available in the building through developments in relation to fire safety issues. Classrooms are well decorated and furnished. Although they tend to be relatively small, classrooms are adequate for the numbers of students that use them. There are suitable specialist facilities for physics, chemistry, biology, information and communication technology, and art.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The college brochure and web-site provide a good range of accessible information about the college to parents and prospective parents. It considerably exceeds the minimum reporting requirement by reporting on students' progress on four occasions during the academic year, supported by parents' evenings.

Procedures for handling complaints

The college has developed well detailed and suitably accessible procedures for handling complaints which fully comply with requirements.

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 provision for students' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- maintain the admissions register to include all the required detail (paragraph 3(9)).

The college does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide facilities for students who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

What the college could do to improve further

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

- provide guidance to staff to establish a more consistent approach to the provision of schemes of work
- seek ways of providing a wider range of additional experiences and activities for students below the age of 16 within the aims of the college
- provide all students of compulsory school age with more opportunities to gain experience of public institutions and services in England.

College details

Name of college	Duff Miller		
DCSF number	207/6262		
Unique reference number	100526		
Type of college	Tutorial		
Status	Independent		
Date college opened	September 1982		
Age range of students	15-19+		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 99	Girls: 68	Total: 167
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 11	Girls: 4	Total: 15
Annual fees (day students)	£5,780-£14,700		
Address of college	59 Queen's Gate		
	London		
	SW7 5JP		
Telephone number	0207225 0577		
Fax number	0207589 5155		
Email address	enqs@duffmiller.com		
Principal	Mr C Denning		
Proprietor	Duff Miller & Co. (London Tutors) Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell		
Dates of inspection	22–23 April 2008		