

Bellerbys College Cambridge

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	873/6023
Unique Reference Number	131074
Inspection number	322258
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik 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 Children, Schools and Families about the college's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the college

Bellerbys college is located on three sites in Cambridge. It was opened in 1996 and is owned along with three other colleges in London, Brighton and Oxford by Study Group International Limited. The college's main aim is to prepare foreign students for entry to university in the United Kingdom. All students are from overseas and all have English as a second or third language. The intake is very diverse with students coming from all over the world. Around half are of Chinese background. There are 371 students on roll aged 15 to 19 years. A very small number are below the age of 16 years. The vast majority of students are boarders and reside with local families or in the college's halls of residence. Boarding provision was subject to a separate inspection in November 2007. This is the college's second inspection of educational provision. It was first inspected in September 2004.

Evaluation of the college

The college provides a good standard of education and this means that students make good or better progress on all courses. It successfully meets its aim to prepare students for university life. Different nationalities mix very well together with racial harmony and tolerance being a key strength. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The quality of teaching and the curriculum is good. The arrangements for safeguarding students are not robust enough. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the previous education inspection and good progress since the boarding inspection.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. Provision is effective for all ages and abilities and in all subjects. A strength is the effective way students' linguistic needs are met through curriculum planning.

Appropriate curriculum policies are supported well by a range of helpful additional documentation. Schemes of work are completed for each subject but their quality varies. The best schemes of work contain detailed plans as to what is to be taught and provide good support for the continuity of learning, in particular at International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) level. The less successful ones lack detail about how subjects are taught and the resources used. Students at all

levels have access to a suitably broad range of subjects. The college provides four main courses. There is an English Language Preparation Programme (ELPP) for those whose level of English is not sufficient to start their chosen academic course. A Foundation course, in a range of subjects, leads directly to university entry. In addition the college provides A-level and AS-level courses, as well as GCSE and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) subjects. The college goes to considerable lengths to ensure that students are placed on courses which suit both their aspirations and aptitudes. This support is well focused through the tutor system and effective monitoring of students' progress over time.

The small number of compulsory school age students take IGCSE courses over three or four terms. Most take six subjects, but this can vary according to need and ability. All of these students take English as a second language and mathematics, and then choose from a suitable range of options, including art, science, information and communication technology (ICT), media, communications, accounts and economics. All students are provided with effective education in personal, social and health education and citizenship. Careers education is enhanced well by the involvement of local expertise. This provision has improved since the last education inspection. A-level students are able to specialise in subjects suitably chosen to support them in pursuing higher education courses such as the medical sciences. The college provides many opportunities to attend plays, musicals and the ballet in London and Cambridge. The provision helps develop students' cultural development and understanding of British life. Whilst there are a wide range of additional activities, the level of participation in clubs is fairly limited.

Teaching ranges from outstanding to satisfactory and is good overall. Provision ensures students achieve well and gain good examination results with some of high quality. The teaching of English, particularly in ELPP is a strength of the college.

One student summed up the view of many when she said, 'Teachers are well organised, friendly, give good individual attention, are experts in what they teach and know the best way to get the subject over'. Inspectors agree. Lessons are effectively planned and teachers have high expectations as to what can be achieved. Teachers form excellent relationships with students and this makes for a very positive climate in class. Well structured worksheets and supportive learning materials are successfully used to extend learning. A good feature is the careful use of language by the teacher to ensure that those who do not speak English fluently understand the meaning of technical language and colloquialisms. This is done without compromising the intellectual rigour of the subject. Teachers ask lots of pertinent questions but students' responses are often quite brief. They are not encouraged enough to use the technical language taught and to speak at length to the teacher or each other. In some lessons individuals are too passive and teachers do not engage them enough to check their understanding about the concepts being taught. Marking is of good quality. It clearly pinpoints what students do well and what must be improved.

Assessment of students' learning is very good. Staff use a mix of external examinations and internal reviews to securely evaluate the standards achieved. Effective moderation of work ensures that the judgements made about students' performance are robust. Resources are adequate and sufficient in range and quality for the courses offered. A start has been made installing whiteboard computer technology in classrooms but there is a general lack of computers in teaching areas. The computer suites are limited in number and equipment is quite old and does not function at a fast speed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are very self-confident and teachers use sensitivity and praise to develop their self-esteem. Behaviour in and around the college is excellent. Students enjoy their time at Bellerbys and this is demonstrated by their very good attendance. Students have a well-developed sense of social responsibility, not only towards each other but to other communities around the world. They have raised money for a number of projects which has supported the building of three schools abroad. Students live together in harmony very well, showing a clear tolerance for the diversity of each other's background and an acceptance of different beliefs and cultures. These high levels of mutual respect are reflected in the great atmosphere around the college. 'We are all independent, alone, in the same situation, and we all understand each other,' was a comment articulated within a group discussion. Students develop a strong understanding of English institutions, culture and traditions, through the opportunity to visit art galleries and other places of interest in Cambridge and London. Visitors, such as the local community police officer, come to the college to introduce students to English law and civic duties. Understanding of European and economic issues are successfully developed by the residential visit to the European Parliament and Bank.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Satisfactory procedures are in place to promote students' welfare and health. Its procedures to safeguard them are inadequate. Because there is a serious weakness in provision, the overall welfare, health and safety of students is inadequate.

Students say that teachers care for them academically and personally. They also say that their host families look after them well. Individual needs are carefully taken into account when placing students in the right kind of accommodation. Staff are suitably deployed to ensure that students are properly supervised. The child protection policy is satisfactory but it is not fully implemented. Staff vetting procedures are not robust enough. Anti-bullying and disciplinary procedures are of good quality and effectively implemented. On the rare occasion when serious disciplinary offences occur a written record is kept. The last fire officer's report judged the college had a satisfactory level of fire safety. Sound fire risk assessments are regularly carried out.

Whilst provision promotes a healthy lifestyle, a minority of students choose not to adopt one by smoking at breaktime and by choosing non-healthy snacks from the college vending machines. A significant proportion of students who completed the inspection questionnaire say the college could do more to help them make sensible choices about what to eat and drink and would like more opportunities for regular exercise. Attendance registers are completed satisfactorily. The admissions register which did not meet requirements the last time the college was inspected, remains non-compliant. A disability strategy exists but there is no three-year plan indicating how the college will fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Staff vetting procedures are inadequate. This weakness was identified by the previous inspection of educational provision. Systems for recording vetting outcomes are inconsistent. A small number of staff have not been subject to a check by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), or List 99, to confirm their suitability to work with children. The College has applied for CRB checks to be carried out on all of these staff and are awaiting the results. Before staff are appointed all but one of the necessary checks are made. A medical fitness check is not carried out.

The boarding inspection identified that students were placed with host families before CRB checks were done thereby placing students at risk. Effective action has been taken to rectify this weakness and procedures to check the suitability of host families are now robust. A single register is kept but it does not contain all of the required information.

College's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are in good condition and enable effective learning. They are well maintained and communal, boarding and teaching areas are clean, tidy and suitably decorated. The boarding inspection identified a lack of adequate ventilation in residential accommodation and recommended that all windows above the ground floor must be fitted with suitable opening restrictors. These weaknesses have been addressed effectively.

Classrooms are of an appropriate size for the number of students using them. Furniture is arranged well to suit the predominantly seminar style of teaching which supports effective dialogue between teachers and students. There are appropriate facilities for students who are ill at the Manor campus but not at the Queen's site. The leadership is aware of the problem and plans to improve this facility when extending the Queen's building during the next year. There is good specialist accommodation for science and art.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents and carers receive detailed and comprehensive information about the college's provision through its brochure, enrolment pack and website, which is in several languages. The website is a useful vehicle for informing parents and carers about the latest news and events. The college is in regular contact with parents by telephone and electronically to keep them suitably informed about their child's education. Leaders regularly visit students' home countries and hold parents' evenings, thus enabling parents to discuss educational matters face-to-face. Reports are satisfactory but their quality varies. The best reports give detailed information about attainment and progress and targets are set for improvement. The less effective do not provide enough subject specific comment.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedure meets the requirements. Gaps in arrangements identified by the boarding inspection have been remedied. For example, anonymous complaints can now be made and information about the support provided to complainants is specified. Records of complaints now exist.

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:

- ensure child protection procedures are effectively implemented, by adopting robust staff vetting arrangements (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- ensure the admissions register is maintained in accordance with the regulations (paragraph 3(9)).

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 carry out an appropriate check to confirm their medical fitness (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that prior to confirmation of their appointment, all staff and others who work in the college, have been subject to a check with the CRB, or List 99, to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(2)(b))
- ensure that the register records for each member of staff in post on or after 1 August 2007, the checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of their identity and 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 compliance with the relevant National Minimum Standards for boarding provision (paragraph 4C(2 and 3))

- ensure that the register records for each member of the body of persons named as the proprietor in post on or after 1 August 2007, the checks made of their identity; right to work in the UK; and whether an enhanced CRB check was carried out and the date it was completed or certificate obtained, and where appropriate confirmation that they are not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (paragraph 4C (6 and 7)).

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

- provide facilities on the Queen's site for students who are ill (paragraph 5(I)).

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

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:

- improve provision for ICT.

School details

Name of college	Bellerbys College Cambridge		
DCSF number	873/6023		
Unique reference number	131074		
Type of college	Tutorial		
Status	Independent		
Date college opened	September 1996		
Age range of students	14–19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 199	Girls: 172	Total: 371
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 199	Girls: 172	Total: 371
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day students)	£11,490 - £14,280		
Annual fees (boarders)	£15,540 - £21,300		
Address of college	Queens Campus Bateman Street Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 1LU		
Telephone number	01223 363159		
Fax number	01223 307425		
Email address	jrushton@studygroup.com		
Principal	Mr John Rushton		
Proprietor	Study Group International Limited		
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI		
Dates of inspection	29–30 April 2008		