

Mander Portman Woodward College

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector Jill Bainton

This inspection of the college was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

Age group: 14-19

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.¹

Information about the College

Mander Portman Woodward is a small independent fifth and sixth form college. It is co-educational and provides education for students between the ages of 14 and 19 years. There are currently 154 students on roll, of whom 6 are of compulsory school age. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) accredits the college for independent further and higher education. It is a member of a group of colleges owned by Mander Portman Woodward Limited. Established in Cambridge in 1987, it occupies two large linked Victorian houses on a quiet road a short walking distance from the centre of the city. Admission is by interview and students enter the college having had a wide range of previous academic experience. The majority of students live locally and attend the college on a daily basis. Currently, about 40 students from abroad lodge in Cambridge whilst attending courses. Foreign students are required to have a high level of proficiency in English before they are admitted, although additional support is available from the college. A wide range of academic courses is offered leading to GCSE, A level and AS level.

The aims of the college are set out in the prospectus, which emphasises the importance of hard work and that once a student is accepted, the aim of the college *'is to provide the most effective possible preparation for the specific exams'* that the student will be taking. It further emphasises the importance placed on *'intensive tuition in small groups, close personal monitoring of academic progress and regular examination practice'*. The college aim is to provide a *'friendly and informal working environment'* where the atmosphere is *'positive and conducive to success.'*

The last education inspection took place in June 2006 and the boarding provision was inspected by Ofsted Social Care inspectors in March 2008.

Evaluation of the College

Mander Portman Woodward College is successful in meeting its aims and meets all the required regulations. The college provides an outstanding quality of education. An outstanding curriculum supported by very well informed teaching enables students to reach standards of work that are well above average. The provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their welfare,

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

health and safety are outstanding. By the time the students leave they have developed into mature, thoughtful and responsible young people. The college has secure arrangements for safeguarding. The college has improved the level of provision reported at the last inspection.

Quality of education

The college provides an outstanding quality of education for its students.

The curriculum is outstanding; it covers a very wide range of subjects both at GCSE and A level. The college devises an individual timetable for each student and is able to tailor the curriculum to meet his or her needs. Students can either study the examination syllabus over a two-year period or due to the very flexible approach of the college they can access a two-year course in one year. Any subject combinations and number of subjects may be studied. The college offers multiple entry points and students can switch courses if necessary. There is the flexibility to combine courses of differing lengths and type. The college make every effort to provide a course if a student requests it. Students can currently choose from 19 subjects at GCSE and 30 at A level. They are taught individually or in small groups of no more than eight students. These small teaching groups help students to re-engage in lessons when they may have previously had a negative school experience. Students who may need additional help are carefully assessed and their individual needs met through an efficient support system. Students commented that this support was very beneficial. All the curriculum subjects are examination based and this is reflected in the well documented schemes of work. Students are given well-judged advice as to their choice of subjects, which helps in their preparation for the next stage of their education. They have access to the local Connexions service for careers advice. Students who do not have English as their first language engage in a planned course to improve their language skills leading to examinations in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The college teaches a well thought out 'life skills' programme, which encompasses personal, social, health and citizenship education. As part of this programme a number of external speakers come to share their experience, which may be as a member of a business or local service. To further enhance the curriculum the students have the opportunity to take part in a range of visits outside the college, either in connection with a subject they are studying or of a social nature.

The quality of the teaching and assessment is outstanding. This effectively promotes the students' progress and success in examinations. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and they have a very good understanding of the course requirements. The experienced staff explain their ideas well and engage the students in purposeful dialogue which encourages them to develop their own ideas and increase their understanding. For example, during an ethics lesson students were encouraged to explore their views on genetic engineering under the sensitive guidance of their tutor. The teaching interests the students and fires their imagination, for example, in

a history of art lesson exploring the effects of a painting on the viewer. The teaching is matched to the abilities of the students with an appropriate level of tasks, which provides sufficient challenge for the more able. A large number of rooms are equipped with an interactive whiteboard, however, they were not always used to their full capabilities to extend the students' knowledge and understanding. The pace of lessons is brisk and students are encouraged to keep on task, even in the long lessons. Homework is used very well to reinforce and extend what is learned in the lessons and the staff provide very detailed feedback enabling the students to improve their work. When a small minority are not sufficiently engaged staff make every effort to ensure their inclusion and the college adopts a proactive approach to supporting them through their temporary difficulties. The staff are very good at helping students in their self-assessment, supporting them and indicating how they can gain additional marks in examinations. The college has very detailed assessment procedures and reports very regularly to parents through the college intranet. This provides parents with a considerable amount of detail, which enables them to know how their children are progressing weekly. Parents have the opportunity to meet staff at regular intervals. Formal written reports are provided four times each year.

Throughout the college the students make outstanding progress and achieve well above average standards in examinations, including GCSE and A level. At A level more than 70% of examinations sat by students result in a grade A or B. At GCSE students achieve grades A* to C around 20% above the national average. In 2008 the college was top of the Department for Children, School and Families, School and College (post-16) Achievement and Attainment tables, which indicates their contextual value added for Cambridgeshire schools. The college has a programme of monitoring teaching, which it has identified in its self-evaluation as an area which could be consolidated.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and students commented both through the questionnaires and verbally that they like the college. They speak openly and without prompting, of how much they enjoy it, saying "I love it here... the teachers really help you... everyone is very friendly." Each student has a personal tutor whom they report that they get to know very well and confirm that they can speak to as often as they wish. The students' behaviour is outstanding both within lessons and around the college and this is reflected in their good rates of attendance. Some students have had a previous negative experience of school. Their increased self-confidence and self-reliance since attending the college, reflects the emphasis placed by the college on each individual and the care taken to ensure that each student has a positive experience.

The older students are given a sense of responsibility through supporting new and younger students. The 'life skills' programme is effective and provides the students

with valuable skills needed in their future careers. A range of speakers to the college and visits outside further enhance the students' understanding of the world around them, including English services and institutions. They understand the simple college rules and most respond to them in a positive way, making the most of their opportunities. The students comment that the college is a sociable place with all the students mixing well, including those from overseas. A number of social events, including an annual ball and an international evening, help students to integrate well. The varied cultural backgrounds of the students are celebrated and racial harmony is promoted well. The students participate in a wide range of charity fund raising events including supporting an educational project in Ghana, thus gaining an understanding of the needs of the broader, local and international community. By the time the students leave the college they have matured into articulate and confident young adults, well prepared to meet the next phase of educational life. The overwhelming majority are successful in their application to universities.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

This aspect of the college's work is outstanding. It is a very safe place in which to work and learn. The college has devised and effectively implemented a very wide range of policies, which includes anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside the college, behaviour and safeguarding. All visits and activities at the college are carefully risk assessed. The procedures for safeguarding are very robust, with a comprehensive policy, which meets the current guidance. Two staff are trained in child protection at the appropriate leadership level and all staff have received appropriate child protection training. There are many trained first aiders; accidents are diligently recorded and well-stocked first aid boxes are located where needed. Fire safety procedures are robust. The member of staff responsible for health and safety is very vigilant about all aspects of the students' safety in and around the building. Healthy eating at lunchtime in the college refectory, and regular planned exercise, help to promote the students' well-being. The admission and attendance registers are kept according to the regulations. In response to the last inspection report the attendance of students of compulsory school age is now carefully recorded. The college has fulfilled its duties regarding the Disability Discrimination Act and has devised a detailed three-year accessibility plan.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The college has rigorous procedures for staff appointment, including medical checks on all staff as required following the last inspection. They check all staff for their suitability to work with children and hold the required information on a single central register.

College's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable and provide a positive learning environment. The college is located in two large houses, which have been suitably

adapted for student use. There are specialist rooms for information and communication technology, art and science. The premises are attractive, well maintained and appropriately heated, lit and ventilated. The current premises have reached maximum capacity. The college has identified the need for additional premises including more specialist rooms. There are facilities for students who may be ill, which was a requirement following the last inspection. There is a fenced grassed outdoor area, which the students can use for recreational purposes.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

A wide range of information is available to parents, carers and others through the website, prospectus and newsletters. These fulfil all regulatory requirements. Parents receive very regular reports on their children's progress. A large number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed a very high degree of satisfaction with the college, making comments such as, 'they provide everything they promised and more... the communication is excellent... they create a friendly and cooperative environment amongst the students.'

Procedures for handling complaints

The college has a set of procedures, which fully meet the regulations.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out in March 2008 under the Care Standards Act 2000^[1] having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The provision was judged to be good.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Consolidate the planned measures to monitor teaching.
- Make more effective use of the interactive white boards to extend learning.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs	✓			
How well students make progress in their learning	✓			

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students	✓			
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The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

Name of College	Mander Portman Woodward College (MPW)
DCSF number	873/6017
Unique reference number	110930
Type of College	Fifth and Sixth Form College
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1987
Age range of students	14-19
Gender of students	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time students)	Male: 96 Female: 58 Total: 154
Number of boarders	Male: 28 Female: 9 Total: 37
Annual fees (day students)	£ 3,330 - £15,207
Annual fees (boarders)	£ 8,730 - £20,607
Address of College	Mander Portman Woodward College 3-4 Brookside Cambridge CB2 1JE
Telephone number	01223 350158
Fax number	01223 366429
Email address	enquiries@cambridge.mpw.co.uk
Principal	Dr Nick Marriott
Proprietor	Mander Portman Woodward Limited
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton
Dates of inspection	8-9 December 2009