

Abbey College

Independent school progress report

DCSF registration number	885/6026
Unique Reference Number (URN)	117035
Inspection number	361178
Inspection dates	17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Best

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Purpose and scope of the visit

This inspection visit was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², and under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.³

The visit was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

The Abbey College provides education for male and female students aged 14 to 19 years. It caters predominantly for students from abroad, although a small number of British students attend the college. All of the current students reside in the college's boarding houses. For a large proportion of the students, English is not their principal language. An English language programme is available to these students.

The College aims to, '...foster a community of international understanding and shared values in which overseas students receive the quality of academic education and support in English language which will enable them to both succeed in the short term and in the longer term to progress successfully to higher education in the universities and subjects of their choice'.

The college is privately owned and is situated on a 70 acre site in Malvern Wells in Worcestershire. The college was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2009 and by The British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education in March 2010. The English language summer school provision was inspected by The British Council in July 2009. A new Principal took over in January 2010.

Context of the visit

When the college was inspected in November 2009, a number of shortcomings were found in both the educational and care provision. The college submitted an action plan to address these, and this was accepted in March 2010. This is the first monitoring visit to check the progress the college has made in implementing its action plan.

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

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

At the time of the last inspection, the college did not provide students in their second year of GCSE with all of the required elements of the curriculum, including the scientific, human and social, and aesthetic and creative aspects. The college has reviewed its provision and the curriculum now meets requirements. From September 2010, the college will offer an International GCSE (IGCSE) programme covering all the required aspects of the curriculum. The inspection in November 2009 also found that there was no framework in place to evaluate students' performance in relation to national norms or the college's aims. The college has put in place a clear framework which meets requirements. This enables students' performance to be evaluated by both the college's own aims, which are closely linked to its curriculum policy, and national norms. The new Principal has undertaken a comprehensive statistical analysis of student destination data which shows very favourable retention rates.

The inspection in November 2009 found a number of shortcomings in the college's arrangements for promoting the welfare and safety of students. The college's anti-bullying policy was insufficiently detailed: for example, it did not include an adequate definition of bullying or provide sufficient clarity about how incidents of bullying should be dealt with. The revised anti-bullying policy meets requirements. It provides clear definitions of different types of bullying and outlines the signs and symptoms, together with procedures and outcomes for resolving any incidents. The college has now put in place a discrete behaviour policy which complements its anti-bullying policy. Previously, college rules were included within the student handbook but these were not enforced systematically. The new policy is comprehensive and meets requirements. It covers both the academic and boarding aspects of college life and provides clear guidance about rewards, sanctions and consequences. A student management policy provides a very explicit summary of the college's expectations and sanctions, and is given to all students. In addition, there are 10 college rules that have been agreed and endorsed by the recently established college council which is taking an active and purposeful role in the operation and life of the college.

Although the college had a policy in place for visits away from the college site, this lacked sufficient detail to ensure that visits were adequately planned. Risk assessments for off-site visits were not robust enough because they did not consistently assess risks accurately and provision to minimise risks was not always sufficient. The college has put in place a comprehensive policy which reflects the Department's guidance. Overall, the policy is being implemented effectively although some minor omissions were identified during the visit and drawn to the attention of the Principal during this progress monitoring visit. The college's first aid policy was also found to be insufficiently detailed at the time of the last inspection. It did not include guidance about the level of injury that would trigger an emergency ambulance call, or explain procedures on how to deal with spillages of bodily fluids.

The college has revised its first aid policy and subsequently implemented it. It is now a comprehensive policy that meets requirements. It provides detailed guidance on procedures, reporting and recording and responsibilities. The college has successfully addressed issues raised in the last inspection concerning avoidable safety hazards and is implementing a phased programme for the refurbishment and decoration of the boarding accommodation.

At the time of the inspection in November 2009, although the college had designated a senior member of staff to have responsibility for child protection, this person was not suitably trained. Two senior members of staff attended and completed training in February 2010 and an appropriate programme of staff training has been implemented. To comply with the national minimum standards, the inspection in November 2009 indicated that the college nurse needed to register with the United Kingdom Nursing and Midwifery Council: while satisfactory progress is being made towards this recommendation, the process is not yet complete.

The inspection in November 2009 found that the college has not been sufficiently rigorous when appointing staff: it had not routinely carried out all of the required checks before confirming the appointment of new staff. Furthermore, the college's single central record, showing the checks made on the proprietor and staff, was incomplete. The college has addressed all the shortcomings identified and recent appointments have followed procedures. The college has also made the necessary checks on existing staff retrospectively, where necessary. The single central record is now complete and available both in electronic and printed formats. All the requirements for this standard are now met.

When inspectors visited in November 2009, they found that the college did not make available to parents and prospective parents details of its safeguarding policy. This has been successfully addressed by placing the policy on the college's website and by sending copies directly to parents, carers and agents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The college has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

In order to meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated regulations, the college must:

- provide the Department with a copy of the college nurse's registration with the United Kingdom Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMS 15.3).

School details

Name of school	Abbey College		
DCSF number	885/6026		
Unique reference number (URN)	117035		
Type of school	Boarding		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	10 December 1979		
Age range of pupils	14–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 76	Girls: 30	Total: 106
Number of boarders	Boys: 76	Girls: 30	Total: 106
Annual fees (boarders)	Up to £19,950		
Address of school	251/3 Wells Road Malvern Worcestershire WR14 4JF		
Telephone number	01684 892300		
Fax number	01684 892757		
Email address	enquiries@abbeycollege.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr David Glaves		
Proprietor	Mr Hekmat Kaveh		
Reporting inspector	Michael Best		
Dates of inspection	Thursday 17 June 2010		