



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

ST CLARE'S OXFORD PFE

(Charity 294085)

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Website	www.stclares.ac.uk	
Principal	Mrs Paula Holloway	
Chair of Governors	Mr Charles Richard Dick	
Age Range	16+	
Total number of students	71	
Numbers by age and type of study	16 – 18	13
	18+:	58
	EFL only:	33
	FE only:	21
	EFL and FE:	17
Inspection dates	9 - 11 February 2016	

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language schools. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the institution's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through Tier 4 of the points-based system for student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Established in 1953, St Clare's College, Oxford is a registered charity, with a mission to nurture a lifelong passion for learning and an enduring commitment to global citizenship. It aims to advance international education and understanding. The college is led by the principal who reports to the governing body. Two different types of provision are offered: the International Baccalaureate diploma course and the focus of this inspection, International Further Education.
- 1.2 The International Further Education provision consists of four programmes of study providing pathways into higher education: Liberal Arts (LA), English plus Academic Subjects (EAS), University Foundation Course (UFC) and English as a foreign language. Students can join the LA and EAS programmes in September or January and the UFC in September or November. Students for English language courses can join on a flexible basis by agreement. The college also provides academic and English language courses during the summer period. Acceptance onto academic courses is dependent on students meeting set entrance criteria as well as meeting the appropriate English language skills level. Students can stay in either college residences or with local host families. All students under 18 years stay in host family accommodation.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 71 students, the vast majority being over 18 years. The majority of students have English as an additional language (EAL) and come from 20 countries, including America (USA), Argentina, Belgium, Germany & Italy. Two students attended with specific special educational needs/disabilities (SEND) and 19 students attended on Tier 4 visas.
- 1.4 The college was last inspected on the 24 February 2015 when it met all Key Standards and the quality of education was judged to exceed expectations.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Testing of students prior to arrival is thorough and students receive outstanding levels of information, advice and guidance. Initial assessment is comprehensive and is highly successful in placing students at the correct level. A wide range of very high quality courses is offered that fully meets the needs and aspirations of the students and provides clear routes to further study. Support for students with specific learning and language difficulties and/or disabilities (SEND) is excellent. Courses on offer to Tier 4 students meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is outstanding with highly qualified and knowledgeable teachers. English language teaching is excellent. However, in a few lessons, error correction is inconsistent. Students are active in class, make excellent progress and demonstrate very high levels of independence in their learning. Assessments are thorough and students receive outstanding levels of feedback. Students make consistently high levels of progress in their studies and receive excellent support from their teachers on what they need to do to improve.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. The premises are fit for purpose, safe, secure and well maintained. There is an appropriate number of staff trained in first aid and fire safety who are supported by highly effective policies and well monitored systems. The arrangements to mitigate risk including fire safety and first aid are excellent. The arrangements for food preparation are excellent. The college maintains accurate registration and attendance records and fulfil the Home Office requirements for Tier 4 visas. The policy for the collection and refund of fees is fair. Pastoral support is outstanding and students report that they are very well cared for. The social activities programme is outstanding and provides interesting and wide-ranging activities which enhances the students learning experience. Careers guidance is excellent with high levels of information, advice and guidance provided to allow students to make informed decision about their future. The care of students under 18 years is excellent and is supported by well-developed systems and highly effective oversight. Residential accommodation, including the management of host family accommodation is excellent and students report high levels of satisfaction with their accommodation.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. Governors provide effective oversight and educational direction and are highly effective in discharging their responsibilities for education and welfare. There are clearly devolved responsibilities and accountabilities and well-defined policies and procedures are introduced, implemented and monitored appropriately. Self-evaluation is accurate and result in highly effective improvement planning and target setting. The systems for assuring quality are comprehensive and highly successful. The arrangements for recruiting and retaining staff are outstanding with all pre-

employment identity checks completed prior to appointment. Staff records are meticulously maintained. The provision of information is excellent.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to arrival is excellent. Students receive outstanding levels of information, advice and guidance prior to arrival to ensure they fully understand the academic and English language skills requirements of their chosen programme of study. Great care is taken to identify individual learning requirements resulting in tailored learning programmes that successfully support and enable students' career aspirations.
- 3.2 Initial assessment is comprehensive, systematic and successfully places students on courses that match their ability and aspirations. The process provides teachers with a thorough assessment of individual learning needs, subject specialisms and personal support requirements. Teachers make excellent use of this information to create detailed academic learning plans that successfully monitor and measure student achievement.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.3 The college offers as well-defined curriculum which successfully supports its aim to enable students to access higher education in the UK and abroad. The curriculum is well organised and highly effective in meeting students' personal aims and aspirations. The range of subjects within programmes is outstanding and offers students great flexibility within their study programmes. As a result, students report very high levels of satisfaction with their courses. The course provision is further enhanced by a comprehensive cross-college programme that provides opportunities to explore cultural and global issues as well as evoking wider interests. Consequently, students are able to widen the scope of their awareness and understanding of cultural themes.
- 3.4 Students are well educated in accordance with the college's aims and ethos resulting in nearly all students making excellent progress and completing their courses. There is an excellent range of support for students with specific learning and language difficulties and/or physical disabilities (SEND). The English language provision is outstanding, and is highly successful in supporting and complementing the academic programme. It provides excellent opportunities for students to move through language examinations and academic programmes.
- 3.5 Courses on offer to Tier 4 students meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance.

3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning

- 3.6 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is outstanding. Teaching is excellent. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable and most are experts in their field. Lessons are well planned and ensure students are appropriately

challenged and motivated. Teachers encourage students to reflect on their lessons and this further contributes to strengthening students general knowledge and subject understanding. However, in a few English language lessons, error correction is inconsistent and results in students missing opportunities to practise grammar and pronunciation skills. Resources are of a high quality and provoke interest and promote curiosity, whilst encouraging students to explore and develop skills. As a result, students thoroughly enjoy their lessons, take full responsibility for their learning and make excellent progress in class. The vast majority of students are highly motivated and demonstrate excellent levels of independent learning making very good use of the college's wide range of self-study resources and facilities.

- 3.7 Assessment is thorough and consistent and teachers challenge students to explore and rationalise their learning in class and in assignments. Consequently, students' work is consistently of a high standard.
- 3.8 Teachers provide outstanding levels of learning support through regular academic tutorials, individual learning plans and target setting. They actively monitor individual student's progress, modify lessons to incorporate individual support needs and successfully respond to specific learning requirements. Feedback on marked work is excellent and provides consistent feedback and clear direction on what students need to do to improve.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.9 Attainment and progress is excellent. Students make outstanding progress and success levels are consistently high. The evidence from lesson observation, scrutiny of work and college progress data shows that overall, learners are able to acquire new knowledge and make excellent progress.
- 3.10 Students report that they are very happy with the progress that they are making. All courses are evaluated against externally set performance measures and the results for students who sit external examinations are very high. Attendance levels are excellent.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

- 4.1 The arrangements for health, safety and security of the premises are excellent. Policies are thorough, well implemented and provide clear guidance. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety practice and this contributes to high levels of safety awareness across all areas of the college. There are appropriate numbers of trained fire marshals and first aiders. Fire safety procedures are well-monitored, legally compliant and meticulous records are maintained. The arrangements for assessing and mitigating risk are outstanding. Highly effective systems ensure students' safety in the college premises, as well as when undertaking external activities. Students report feeling very safe at the college and in residences.
- 4.2 All college premises provide a safe, secure and healthy environment that are fit for purpose, very well maintained with high standards of decoration. There are sufficient washrooms and these are very clean and fresh. The vast majority of buildings can accommodate access for students with physical disabilities and staff respond well to supporting these students. All areas are well-lit, have satisfactory insulation and adequate ventilation. Classrooms are clean, well-resourced with appropriate furniture and fittings and provide a very attractive and comfortable environment for students and staff. Student areas are well maintained, clean and comfortable. The arrangements for food preparation are excellent and the dining area is very clean and well maintained.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.3 Arrangements for student registration and the recording of attendance are excellent. Registration and attendance records are accurate and comprehensive student files are maintained. Student attendance, including those under 18 years, is closely monitored and any absence is quickly investigated. Attendance tracking is meticulous and precise records are held. The procedures and systems to meet Home Office requirements for students attending on Tier 4 visas are excellent.
- 4.4 The arrangements for the collection and refunds of fees are fair.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.5 Pastoral support for students is excellent. Students receive high levels of pastoral care ensuring all personal and welfare needs are met. Effective policies are supported by successful monitoring systems that quickly identify concerns and, as a result, students are very well cared for. The induction process is excellent and successfully supports students to settle into their studies quickly. Tutorials are comprehensive and are highly effective in identifying individual support needs. Communication across the college is outstanding and ensures pastoral care has the highest priority. Relationships at all levels are warm, friendly and highly supportive, resulting in prompt action and intervention when necessary.

- 4.6 The social activities programme is outstanding. It is wide-ranging, inclusive and highly successful in engaging and encouraging participation. Activities are well planned and result in students taking part in a very wide range of cultural, social and fun activities. Students report that they are highly satisfied with the opportunities they have to integrate with their peers as well as engaging in well-chosen activities that positively contribute to widening cultural diversity.
- 4.7 Students have access to a highly successful careers guidance service that begins prior to arrival. Students receive high levels of information, advice and guidance through a wide range of activities, seminars and tutorials.

4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s

- 4.8 The arrangements for child protection and safeguarding are excellent. The policy, systems and protocols have proper regard to official guidance and implementation and result in very high levels of student safety. All staff are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks prior to appointment and accurate records are maintained by the college in a centralised register of appointments. There is an appropriately trained designated child protection officer who provides excellent oversight and management of this aspect. All staff have been appropriately trained in line with their roles and responsibilities and demonstrate clear understanding of their responsibilities for younger students. All interventions with young learners are meticulously recorded and as a consequence managers have excellent oversight of this area and regularly review the impact of the college's practice to ensure high standards are maintained.
- 4.9 All students under 18 years are placed with established and well-monitored host family accommodation. An appropriate range of welfare checks are undertaken with these students to ensure and confirm that they settle in quickly.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.10 The quality of residential accommodation is outstanding. Students are provided with very high quality residential accommodation that is well managed and registered in accordance with national requirements. College residences provide comfortable, safe and secure accommodation. All residences are enhanced by the presence of a resident member of staff who provides additional pastoral support. Students report very high levels of satisfaction with their accommodation.
- 4.11 The arrangements for host family accommodation are excellent. The arrangements to recruit and vet families are robust and excellent records are maintained. There are highly effective systems to facilitate successful placements. As a result, there are very few issues or complaints.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight is excellent. The board brings to the college much educational expertise, and provides excellent oversight. The college's aims are well supported, particularly its inclusive ethos and emphasis on supporting students, by providing the resources necessary to make these aims realistically achievable. The college meets its statutory obligations for safeguarding, welfare and health and safety successfully. There is a strong focus on caring for students which runs through the whole college and particularly in relation to those under the age of 18. Senior managers are well supported in carrying out their roles. They are also challenged to introduce improvements to achieve higher levels of quality.
- 5.2 The board knows the college well and has a clear insight into the day-to-day working of the college, through regular briefings from the principal and senior leaders. The college's work is supported financially by excellent structures. As a result, the college buildings are well maintained and high quality staff recruited and retained.
- 5.3 Governors ensure that there are appropriate policies in place and review them regularly for effectiveness to ensure that they still meet the needs of the college. All legal permissions are in place.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.4 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent with clearly devolved responsibilities and accountabilities. Senior leaders have comprehensive and systematic oversight of all aspects through well organised and effective processes. Policies are excellent and regularly reviewed for effectiveness and implementation.
- 5.5 There is a very successful range of systems to assure quality and to ensure academic standards are consistently high. Student feedback is regularly collected, appropriately analysed and results in prompt action. Self-evaluation is excellent and provides accurate information on the strengths and areas for development. Consequently, quality improvement planning is highly reliable and enables clear target setting that results in successful development across all areas of the college.
- 5.6 Staff management is thorough and accurate records maintained. The procedures for recruiting, securing and retaining well qualified and experienced staff are robust and comply with college policies. All staff are appropriately qualified and many teachers are experts in their subject areas. All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and health and safety as well as student welfare and academic procedures. Staff appraisals and performance management policies are well-implemented and careful records retained.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.7 Systems and processes to monitor and manage quality assurance are outstanding. Students' views are actively sought through regular questionnaires, feedback in tutorials and through all staff knowing the students well.
- 5.8 Managers make excellent use of performance information and data and this is effectively used to ensure high standards of student achievement are maintained. Individual progress tracking, student feedback and complaints all contribute to managers identifying trends or issues and as a result resources are quickly deployed to enable improvement. Managers and leaders know the college well.
- 5.9 The systems and processes for staff appraisals are excellent and well established. A successful teaching observation programme has been effectively enhanced by the introduction of a pilot scheme that facilitates peer observations. Teachers report this is providing them with outstanding professional development opportunities as well as empowering teachers to become more actively involved in the quality assurance and improvement process.
- 5.10 There is an appropriate complaints procedure that includes provision for resolution through an independent external adjudicator. Students confirm they are aware of how to register a complaint.
- 5.11 The college operates an appropriate fee protection scheme.

5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks

- 5.12 The arrangements for staff recruitment are excellent. All pre-employment checks including collecting references and ensuring Disclosure and Baring Service reports are undertaken.
- 5.13 Staff records are retained on a well-managed school central register and staff files are accurate and well-organised.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.14 The provision of information is excellent. Information on the website and in printed material accurately reflects the college.
- 5.15 The college responded to all requests for information to support this inspection in a timely manner.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the excellent quality provided, the college should:

- Ensure error correction is consistent in all English language classes.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the governors' representative, and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mrs Jacqueline Lawrence	Lead Inspector
Mrs Suzanne Bell	Team Inspector