



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

CHERWELL COLLEGE OXFORD

(Company No. 08092120)

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Website	www.cherwell-college.co.uk
Principal	Mr Stephen Clarke
Proprietor	Mr Stephen Clarke Ms Helen Clarke
Age Range	14+
Total number of students	22
Numbers by age and type of study	Under 16: 3 16 – 18 8 18+: 11 FE only: 22
Inspection dates	19-21 April 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 1972, Cherwell College Oxford is a private co-educational tutorial college, located at three sites in the centre of Oxford. The college was incorporated in 2011 when it was purchased by its current two directors. It is governed by its directors, who also undertake senior roles in the college, including the role of principal. The college's mission is to offer first class teaching through a highly committed and dedicated staff. It aims to help students achieve their highest qualifications in traditional subjects through a bespoke academic programme, which will enable entry to the Russell Group Universities in the UK or other leading universities of the world.
- 1.2 The college offers one and two-year GCSE, A level and Cambridge Pre-U courses, as well as short-term revision courses to students preparing for examinations. International students also take International English Language Testing System (IELTS) courses. The main methods of teaching are through individual tuition and small group seminars.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 22 students. There are equal numbers of male and female students who come from a wide range of countries, including China, Russia and the United Kingdom. The vast majority are over 18 years and English is an additional language (EAL) for the majority of students. The college has 15 students admitted under Tier 4 arrangements. Entry to the college is through interview, assessment of previous results and personal statements. Students are recruited throughout the year. The college has identified two students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 The college was last inspected on the 10 March 2015 when it met all Key Standards and the quality of education was judged to meet 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. Students receive a very good education in accordance with their objectives and the college's aim to prepare students for entry into university. The range of courses offered is of a high quality, fully meets the needs and aspirations of the students and provides clear routes to higher education. Courses on offer to Tier 4 students meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. Initial assessment prior to and on arrival is accurate and is highly effective in placing students on courses matching their abilities, career aspirations and identifying any learning support needs. The quality of teaching is excellent and enables students to make extremely good progress. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use effective teaching methods to motivate and keep the students' interest. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, giving them increased confidence. Consequently, students demonstrate very high levels of knowledge development across all courses and are very well prepared for their external examinations. Feedback on assessments is thorough and clearly identifies suggestions for improvement. The results for the students who sit external examinations are excellent and above national averages.
- 2.3 Arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of students are excellent. The college's buildings are well maintained and provide a comfortable environment which effectively supports learning. An appropriate range of health and safety policies and procedures are in place and implemented effectively. As a result, the college provides a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff. Fire precautions, drills and evacuations are systematically undertaken and are clearly understood by all students and staff. Student registration and attendance records are accurate, very well managed and are highly effective in monitoring attendance and taking necessary action. Procedures for reporting to the Home Office are highly secure. The college's pastoral structure provides excellent support and guidance for students in accordance with its aims. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 are excellent and reflect official guidance. However, the child protection and safeguarding policy is unnecessarily complex which reduces its effectiveness. Residential accommodation is outstanding and contributes effectively to the education and personal development of the students.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The proprietors provide comprehensive oversight and discharge their responsibilities for financial planning and investment in the future very well. Both proprietors take an active role in the work of the college and are highly effective in supporting its aims, monitoring performance and bringing about improvement. As a result, the high standards in the quality of education have been maintained and the standards of care for students improved. Leadership and management are excellent. Roles and

responsibilities are clearly defined and there is highly effective communication between managers and other staff. Effective policies and procedures are introduced, implemented and monitored appropriately. Mechanisms to monitor quality are good and the tracking of student progress excellent. Self-evaluation is well developed and performance data is used systematically to evaluate and improve performance on the different courses offered. The college successfully attracts highly qualified and experienced teachers and managers. Procedures for the recruitment of staff are excellent, in accordance with legal requirements and official guidance, with all appropriate checks undertaken.

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

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

- 3.1 The assessment of students prior to and on arrival is excellent. Comprehensive entry criteria are set and used very effectively by the college and its agents to provide accurate and appropriate advice and guidance to prospective students. On arrival, effective testing and one-to-one interviews ensure students have the appropriate level of initial language skills and academic ability for their selected programme of study. The process is accurate and ensures that the proposed subjects of study and level of course match career and higher education intentions. Where students are identified as having learning or language difficulties, appropriate support is put in place in a timely manner. The continuous enrolment system is very well managed and allows students to apply and start classes at any time.
- 3.2 Initial tutorials clearly identify if the course is at an appropriate level. Excellent use is made of this information by teachers to guide their planning. Detailed advice is provided to students if they wish to change classes.
- 3.3 High quality information, advice and guidance are made available to students through the college's website. The website is detailed and includes accurate information about the curriculum and other facilities on offer. Students confirm that they are highly satisfied with the pre-enrolment advice they receive from the college and its agents.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. Students receive a very good education in accordance with their objectives and the college's aim to prepare students for entry into university. A wide curriculum is offered which is carefully planned and meets the requirements, aptitudes and capabilities of the students very well. Courses satisfy students' needs to achieve high academic results to support entry to their chosen university. The highly flexible nature of the provision enables a programme of study to be provided that is effectively tailored to students' individual academic needs. As a result, retention on all courses is high, with almost all students completing their programme of study. The range of courses and levels available provide students with excellent progression opportunities in line with the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). A comprehensive range of enrichment and social activities and excursions effectively enhance students learning.
- 3.5 Courses on offer to Tier 4 students meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. Courses match those listed on the website and in other marketing materials.

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

- 3.6 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are excellent. Students make excellent progress in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding required for success in external examinations. Achievements are promoted by well-informed, interesting and highly stimulating lessons. Most of the teaching is one-to-one. Thorough planning and an extensive understanding of the needs of their students allow teachers to successfully adapt lessons to meet individual learning needs and effectively challenge students.
- 3.7 The very large majority of teaching is excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are highly effective at building students enthusiasm and confidence for learning. They have extremely good relationships with their students, who feel they care for them as individuals. In most cases, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and quickly engage students' interest and imagination. Teachers ask searching questions that prompt students to think and respond successfully. Frequent checks of learning are used very effectively to monitor progress and confirm understanding.
- 3.8 Teachers know their students well and readily offer individual help and support to ensure high levels of subject knowledge and understanding are developed. The high expectations of teachers ensure that students are consistently challenged and well supported to meet their learning goals. Teachers are highly skilled at keeping students focused on their work, even when they are engaged on self-managed activities. Their enthusiasm for their subject often inspires and motivates students to greater efforts. Teachers demonstrate detailed understanding of current examination structure and awarding body requirements.
- 3.9 Assessment is regular and thorough; it accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses in the students' progress and highlights areas for improvement. Marking is of an excellent quality. Feedback to students is positive, encouraging and accurate, and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Arrangements for tracking students' progress are excellent. The progress of each student is very carefully tracked, allowing teachers and managers to monitor their progress effectively.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.10 Progress and attainment are excellent. Students receive an excellent education which reflects the aims of the college. They quickly master and build confidence in their subject, demonstrating high levels of knowledge and understanding.
- 3.11 The evidence from lesson observations, assignments and scrutiny of work shows that the overall standards being reached are excellent, and that outcomes are high in relation to the students' starting points. Examination results from the past three years are excellent, with average grades in GCSE and A' levels significantly higher than national averages.
- 3.12 Attendance levels are very good and few students withdraw from their chosen course of study. In meetings, students report that they are pleased with their

progress. Analysis of the destinations of learners shows that the great majority of students achieve their course and attain entry to their chosen university.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

- 4.1 Arrangements for the health, safety and security of the premises are excellent. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and communicated to staff and students effectively through induction, regular briefings and college notices. Good investment in the premises has resulted in a well-maintained and well-resourced learning environment which enhances the students' education. Classrooms are spacious, light and well furnished. All electrical equipment is tested regularly as required. Where food is prepared and served there is excellent arrangements to ensure hygienic preparation and service. Toilet facilities are adequate in number and well maintained. Security arrangements are excellent. As a result the college provides a safe and comfortable place for students to study. Students report that they are fully aware of health and safety procedures and feel safe and secure in the college and their residence.
- 4.2 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. A comprehensive health and safety policy is in place with clearly allocated responsibilities. Up-to-date general and fire risk assessments are carried out with clear follow-up actions. These are regularly reviewed. Detailed individual risk assessments are carried out for organised off-site activities. An appropriate number of trained fire marshals and first aiders are in place as well as first aid kits and accident books. Fire action notices are clearly displayed and fire exits are well signposted. Fire protection equipment is properly sited and regularly checked. Regular fire drills are carried out which are well recorded. Staff and students are aware of their responsibilities and have received appropriate health and safety training.
- 4.3 Proper provision is made for students who are ill or injured. A minority of the college buildings are not accessible by wheelchair users or students with mobility difficulties. This information is available at initial interview.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.4 Arrangements for student registration and the recording of attendance are excellent. Admission procedures are comprehensive and properly observed. A central register is accurately maintained and individual student files contain full and detailed information from their first point of contact with the college. All copies of legally required documents are appropriately stamped as verified by the college.
- 4.5 Attendance is accurately recorded and closely monitored, with all unexpected absence effectively followed up the same day. Communication between administrators and academic tutors is excellent and effectively identifies students who are late or who fail to attend for specific sessions. Students are made aware of the need for good attendance and punctuality and, where appropriate, that regular absence will be reported to the Home Office.

- 4.6 Staff have a clear understanding of Home Office requirements regarding the enrolment and attendance requirements for Tier 4 students and adhere to them rigorously. Accurate records of all these matters are recorded on the college's database and in students' individual files.
- 4.7 Clear policies and procedures are in place for the collection and refund of student fees and deposits. The policy is fair and applied consistently.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.8 Pastoral support for students is excellent. Comprehensive oversight and the co-ordination of the welfare and pastoral support, together with an effective system of tutorials, ensures that individual student's personal and academic development is reviewed regularly. An open door policy ensures that students feel confident about approaching members of staff for help if needed. A detailed and useful induction, supported by an informative handbook, allows new arrivals to settle into their courses quickly.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and students and amongst the students themselves are excellent, with a strong culture of mutual respect, integration and tolerance. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures effectively reinforces this culture and the expectations of behaviour and conduct. Clear anti-bullying and harassment policies and procedures are in place, and students report no instances of such behaviour. Meetings with students show that they feel that the college is providing them with a safe and comfortable environment which effectively meets their learning needs.
- 4.10 Comprehensive careers advice ensures that students are very well prepared for further study and career choices. Students regularly participate in a wide range of high quality enrichment and social activities and excursions, which effectively enhances their learning.

4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s

- 4.11 Safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 are excellent. Arrangements have proper regard to official guidance and the implementation of all strategies is frequently checked by senior managers. There is a designated child protection officer in place who is appropriately trained. All staff are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks prior to or on appointment, and accurate records are maintained by the college in a centralised register of appointments.
- 4.12 A range of suitable policies is in place and effectively implemented. However, the child protection and safeguarding policy is unnecessarily complex which reduces its effectiveness. Staff are made aware of safeguarding issues through appropriate training.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.13 The quality of residential accommodation is outstanding. Student accommodation is a key priority for the college. It has invested heavily in developing high quality accommodation that provides a safe and supportive environment for students to live and study in. The buildings are very secure, extremely well maintained and managed. Comprehensive health and safety measures effectively reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Facilities are of a very high standard and contribute effectively to the education and personal development of the students. The premises are properly registered in accordance with national requirements and students report high level of satisfaction with their accommodation.
- 4.14 Detailed risk assessments of residential accommodation are carried out, and students are regularly asked for feedback. Appropriate evening activities are arranged by the college and students appreciate this greatly.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Governance and oversight are excellent. The proprietors provide highly effective oversight, with a clear emphasis on supporting students and developing and maintaining high academic standards. As a result, the high standards in the quality of education have been maintained and the standards of care for students improved.
- 5.2 The educational direction of the college is clear and fully understood by staff. The proprietors take very active and visible roles in the leadership and management of the college, effectively monitoring performance and providing excellent support to staff. Consequently, the college meets its obligations with regard to safeguarding, health and safety and fire safety, including all statutory duties in respect of students under the age of 18. Policies and procedures are well developed, regularly reviewed and effectively contribute to the quality of education and the care of students. Relationships between the proprietor and the senior leadership team are excellent.
- 5.3 Financial management is excellent. Detailed financial planning and appropriate investment in staff, college accommodation and resources effectively contribute to the success of the college and its provision. All necessary legal permissions are in place for the use of the premises, including relevant insurances and licenses.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.4 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. The quality of leadership and management is excellent. Self-evaluation is well-developed and provides an accurate account of the college's key strengths and areas for development. As a result, appropriate and realistic targets are set for improvement. These targets are effectively monitored and the vast majority fully achieved.
- 5.5 A clear management structure promotes effective systems to initiate and implement policies to meet the college's needs, and to monitor their operation. The structure operates very smoothly and successfully and provides clearly defined roles and responsibilities and excellent lines of communication. Relationships between the leadership team and the teaching staff are excellent. Staff report that they are happy and are very supportive of the college.
- 5.6 The college is highly successful in securing and retaining well-qualified staff. A comprehensive system of staff review is in place and is used to ensure staff are well qualified for the work they do and appropriately supported by the management team. A good programme of staff development is in place to ensure that staff are appropriately trained for their roles.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.7 Quality assurance arrangements are excellent. There is a strong culture of improvement within the college and arrangements for quality assurance are highly effective in bringing about change where needed. Data on progress is used extremely well to monitor and evaluate performance, with appropriate actions initiated in a timely manner to ensure improvements are made. Teaching is regularly observed and effective feedback for performance improvement given.
- 5.8 Student feedback is collected systematically through questionnaires and regular tutorials. This feedback is effectively analysed, shared with staff and managers and used regularly to inform teacher development, academic action planning and the identification of college priorities. Meetings with students indicate a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the college.
- 5.9 The complaints procedure is clear and appropriate. Complaints are handled and reported on very effectively which has a direct impact on quality assurance and improvement planning. Complaints are few and students confirmed that they are aware of the policy.

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

- 5.10 Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are excellent. Very well-qualified staff are secured through the application of a thorough and efficient staff recruitment policy. All required recruitment checks have been carried out in a timely manner and appropriately recorded. The process to validate references and qualifications is excellent and the audit trail is clear with due regard to statutory requirements and official guidance. A central record of appointments confirms that all appropriate suitability checks have been made; this is monitored by senior staff.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.11 Provision of information is excellent. The website is clear and user-friendly. Prospective students are able to access accurate and highly relevant information to inform their study choices.
- 5.12 The college was very responsive in providing information for the inspection in a timely manner.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Simplify the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy to give it greater clarity.

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 proprietors 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

Dr Nigel Chambers	Lead Inspector
Mr Peter Casey	Team Inspector