



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

MONITORING VISIT

ST. CLARE'S, OXFORD

Full Name of College	St Clare's Oxford										
Address	139 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7AL (Head Office)										
Telephone Number	01865 552031										
Fax Number	01865 553751										
Email Address	paula.holloway@stclares.ac.uk										
Principal	Mrs Paula Holloway										
Chair of Governors	Mr Richard Dick										
Age Range	17+										
Total number of students	94										
Numbers by age and type of study	<table> <tr> <td>17:</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18+:</td> <td>88</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EFL only:</td> <td>42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FE only:</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EFL and FE:</td> <td>32</td> </tr> </table>	17:	6	18+:	88	EFL only:	42	FE only:	20	EFL and FE:	32
17:	6										
18+:	88										
EFL only:	42										
FE only:	20										
EFL and FE:	32										
Inspection dates	19 February 2012										

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight Monitoring Visits of private further education colleges and English language schools. The focus of the visit is to confirm that the quality standards reported at the last full inspection are being maintained.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the UK Border Agency to inspect privately funded further education colleges, including 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 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 for private colleges;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations to colleges 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.

A monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the quality Standards for Educational Oversight. Inspectors will make judgements on progress against any Action Points and Recommendations made at that time. The inspection will not examine all other Standards in detail but will sample to confirm that previous Standards have been maintained and that there are no contrary indicators to those quality judgements.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 CONTEXT	2
2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS	4
4 STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY	5
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	6
6 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	7
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	8

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 St. Clare's, Oxford was founded in 1953 with a mission to advance international education and understanding. The college is registered as an educational charity and is overseen by the principal who reports to the governing body. The college operates two distinctive sites, one for International Baccalaureate Diploma courses and one for International further education which is the focus of this inspection. The college aims to provide an educational structure that is challenging, rigorous and stimulating and is supported by student-staff relations based on mutual respect and high expectations. It seeks to nurture a lifelong passion for learning and an enduring commitment to global citizenship.
- 1.2 There have been no significant changes in the college since the previous inspection. The college continues to provide international further education and offers four programmes designed as pathways towards higher education. These are liberal arts, English plus academic subjects, university foundation courses and English language courses.
- 1.3 At the time of this visit there were 94 students aged from 17 to 50. The majority of students have English as an additional language (EAL). The liberal arts students come mainly from the USA, together with a small number from European countries. More than 20 other nationalities are represented in the college in small numbers. The college has identified no student as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 The college offers residential accommodation to around 80 of its students. Since the previous inspection one new residential house has been acquired by the college for 8 to 10 students. Special provision is made for the small number of under-18 year olds who are placed in home-stays approved by the college.
- 1.5 The college was last inspected on 10 to 12 January 2012 at which time it met all key Standards and the quality of education exceeded expectations.
- 1.6 The one recommendation from the previous report is:
 - Identify best practice in teaching and share this extensively across all curriculum areas.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations.** The previous inspection of 10 to 12 January 2012 was judged to exceed expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The curriculum across all four course programmes is excellent and is constantly reviewed to ensure it meets the expectations of all students. The quality of teaching is excellent and enables students to make rapid progress and to be highly satisfied with their course of study. Assessment procedures are clear and tailored to individual courses and students. Progress and attainment are recorded centrally to ensure effective monitoring of individuals and groups. University foundation and liberal arts students continue to be given very good guidance on university course choices or for the next stage of their university programme. Students preparing for Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examinations are advised carefully regarding choice of course and level. One-to-one tutorial help is offered to help students achieve their targets and for assessment feedback.
- 2.3 Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are excellent. The college has effective procedures for health and safety which are consistently implemented. Procedures for registration are rigorous and attendance is carefully monitored with due attention to those under 18. Pastoral support is excellent. All staff are checked and trained to an appropriate level for safeguarding those under 18. Arrangements for provision of accommodation are very good and the small number of under 18's are placed in homestays that are chosen and monitored by the college.
- 2.4 Governance, leadership and management are excellent. The college is very well supported by its governing body. Self-evaluation is continuous and the development plan demonstrates that the senior management of the college consider and review all aspects of college life for the educational benefit of students. Regular meetings at all levels take into account the views of staff. Action planning and monitoring of progress against targets are highly effective. Effective quality assurance procedures ensure that high standards and student satisfaction are maintained. Staff at all levels are very committed to providing a high quality education and excellent pastoral care.

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

- 3.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 3.2 The recommendation in this area from the previous inspection report is:
- Identify best practice in teaching and share this extensively across all curriculum areas.
- 3.3 The college has made good progress against the recommendation having reviewed the curricular provision and introduced a programme of blended learning with cross-course and cross-cultural themes. The new initiative has identified teaching themes which are harmonised across courses each month. This approach has brought greater integration amongst students, allowing them to work at their current language ability level and yet take part in shared activities and events. This has included study visits to the rich variety of local places of interests in and around Oxford, to cross-college events and to an interdisciplinary 'Seminar Series' with specialist guest speakers.
- 3.4 The quality of both the academic subject and English language teaching continues to be excellent and ensures students are engaged and make rapid progress. Through regular formal and informal meetings, teachers plan their lessons to meet the curricular demands and needs of the students. Lesson planning continues to be thorough with due attention to students' needs. The new blended learning is approach has been adopted across all English Language courses and continues to be closely monitored. Recent topics in the teacher meetings such as 'Bottom up phonology', 'iPad in the classroom', 'Blended Learning sequences' demonstrate that the college has carefully considered and implemented new ideas. Students are encouraged to attend the open learning and homework club and to work in the 'Study Zone' for personalised attention in areas or weakness or special interest. Full use of technological resources is made to develop digital learning, researching and citation for assignments. Careers and higher education specialist advice is available, including advice on American universities, to enable students to progress to the next stage of their academic career or towards achieving their career goals.
- 3.5 Assessment procedures monitor student progress regularly and thoroughly through individual tutorial time and small academic tutorial meetings. Regular meetings between senior leaders and teaching staff continue to ensure staff share information with regard to monitoring of student progress. Individual student assignments are regularly marked with clear guidance on grading and, when relevant, with areas for improvement. There are very good progression rates between levels and results continue to improve in IELTS and Cambridge examinations. University foundation course students and liberal arts students are given excellent support for university entrance or for the next stage of their university degree. The majority of students on academic programmes are successful in gaining a place at universities in the UK, or further afield.

- 3.6 An interesting and varied cultural and social enrichment programme enhances students' overall experience. In discussions, students reported wholehearted appreciation of all staff support for them. Many students extend their stay or return for a repeat visit to the college, testimony to the commitment of staff and overall positive experience of the students.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 There are no recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report.
- 4.3 The college continues to provide a safe and secure environment for students and staff. The college risk management team meets monthly under the chairmanship of the estates manager. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures is in place and these are effectively implemented, including those for the under 18's. All health and safety matters are well monitored. Health and safety documents form part of the induction process for new staff supported by the human resources management and, for students, by the house managers.
- 4.4 Clear procedures to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards are in place and are well managed. First aid training is provided to key members of staff and lists of first aid trained staff are displayed in all buildings. First aid kits are placed appropriately in each building. All risk assessments for buildings, social outings and trips are thorough and up-to-date. The kitchen has a current food hygiene certificate and serves excellent lunches for students and staff in a convivial dining environment.
- 4.5 Student admission procedures are thorough, registration and attendance records are very well managed and the college effectively monitors attendance. Procedures for reporting to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) are secure.
- 4.6 Pastoral support for students is excellent. Clear safeguarding procedures reflecting official guidance are in place, including for homestays for under 18's with appropriately trained and designated staff. Clear and effective disciplinary, equality and discrimination policies are in place and implemented. Relationships between students and staff and amongst the students themselves are very good. Both international and English speaking students benefit from the excellent mix of nationalities, which enhances their cultural and linguistic experiences.
- 4.7 The college is warm and welcoming, and is very well maintained. Classrooms are spacious, clean and tidy and are suitably furnished for adults. The student room provides a warm and comfortable space for students to relax and socialise. In discussions students reported that they would recommend the college to others without hesitation.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. All key Standards continue to be met.
- 5.2 There are no recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report.
- 5.3 The governing body continues to have effective oversight and clear insight into the day-to-day working and strategic development of the college to support its aims. The governing body sub-divides into committees to support the work of the college and discharges its responsibilities very effectively for all aspects of college life. The principal reports regularly to the governing body. The governing body have supportive contact with staff in the college.
- 5.4 Highly effective operational and educational direction by the senior leaders in the college ensures successful outcomes for students. The self-evaluation process is on-going and successful in identifying specific priorities and targets for educational development. All staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Relationships between the leadership team and the teaching staff are good. Regular meetings between academic leaders and teaching staff ensure reflection on good practice and reviewing of course material.
- 5.5 The continued professional development programme has been successfully further developed to enable sharing of good practice between staff. In-house training and staff development sessions are regularly planned. Performance management of staff is excellent. Student evaluation ensures the college identifies any areas for development and monitors performance at all levels. The college has developed an on-line student evaluation form that is still to be fully implemented.
- 5.6 A rigorous recruitment process continues to ensure that new staff appointed are highly qualified and committed, and that all required checks are carried out. Staff have received appropriate child protection training and are aware of health and safety requirements.
- 5.7 Procedures for handling complaints are well publicised and very effective. Provision of information by the college is excellent.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The college has maintained the excellent standards found at the previous inspection.

Suggestions for further improvement

In order to maintain the excellent standards the college is advised to:

- Develop and implement the on-line student feedback forms.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, and attended registration in lessons. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mrs Flora Bean	Lead Inspector
Mrs Suzanne Bell	Team Inspector