



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

MONITORING VISIT

ST CLARE'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

Full Name	St Clare's Oxford PFE
Address	139 Banbury Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX2 7AL
Telephone Number	01865 552031
Email Address	ines.molinaro@stclares.ac.uk
Website	www.stclares.ac.uk
Principal	Mrs Paula Holloway
Proprietor	Mr Charles Richard Dick
Age Range	16+
Total number of students	84
Numbers by age and type of study	16-17: 17 18+: 67 EFL only: 74 FE only: 10
Inspection date	24 February 2015

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight Monitoring Visits and Extended 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 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.

A monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the 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.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 St Clare's Oxford is a registered charity established in 1953, with a mission to nurture a life-long passion for learning and an enduring commitment to global citizenship. The college is overseen by the principal, who reports to the governing body. Two different types of provision are offered: International Baccalaureate diploma courses and the focus of this inspection, International Further Education.
- 1.2 The International Further Education curriculum offers four programmes designed as pathways towards higher education: liberal arts; English plus academic subjects; university foundation level courses, and English language. Academic courses enrol termly and English language courses are available on a predominately flexible basis. Summer courses are also provided. Students have to meet the entrance criteria as well as meeting appropriate English language levels for university foundation courses, liberal arts and English plus academic subjects. They are provided with accommodation in college residences or with host families.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 84 students, most of whom were adults. The vast majority were not native English speakers. Almost all of the liberal arts students come from the USA, alongside a few from European countries. More than 20 other nationalities are represented across the other programmes. There were no students attending with identified special educational needs/disabilities (SEND).
- 1.4 The college was inspected on 19 February 2013 where it met all Key Standards and the quality of education exceeded expectations. The recommendation from the previous report is:
 - Develop and implement the on-line student feedback forms.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations.** At the previous inspection of 19 February 2013 the college was found to exceed expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Curriculum is outstanding and successfully meets students' needs. Pre-acceptance and initial assessment activities accurately place students on the correct courses and levels. Teaching is excellent, providing students with interesting and stimulating lessons that successfully develop confidence and consolidate academic and English language skills. All students receive outstanding individual support and examination achievement is excellent. Success on short-term, non-examination English language courses is not currently measured, limiting management oversight of the effectiveness of this provision. All courses meet the Home Office requirements for Tier 4 visas.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Policies are clear and well communicated across the college. All statutory requirements are met and there are excellent arrangements for managing health and safety. The high quality premises provide a safe and secure environment. Buildings are well maintained and facilities are outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary, with clear policies and highly effective systems. Pastoral care is at the heart of college life and is outstanding. Careers guidance and support is exceptional, providing both inspiration and support for students. The systems for managing registration and attendance are excellent. The UK Home Office requirements for Tier 4 students are met.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The response to the recommendation has been excellent and, although it has not resulted in the implementation of an online feedback process, it successfully provided managers with insight to support future development of this aspect of quality assurance. Governance is outstanding. Managers have excellent oversight of the college, and the effective management structure results in clear leadership. Policies and procedures are effective and resource management is exceptional. High quality staff are recruited, retained and supported, resulting in high standards in all areas of the college. Staff recruitment processes are exemplary and meticulous records are maintained. Quality assurance systems are strong and self-assessment is accurate. Lesson observations are well managed and give an excellent overview of the quality of teaching. Class observations for regular part-time academic staff do not provide sufficient feedback to teachers and limit the opportunity for these teachers to discuss and plan professional development opportunities. This limits management oversight of this area of the curriculum and teachers' access to peer support and professional development opportunities.

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 Course provision is outstanding, well-organised and highly responsive to individual students' interests and aspirations. The college has well-promoted entrance requirements which, alongside a thorough selection process, ensure students are aware of the college ethos and expectations. On arrival, students participate in a wide-range of thorough assessment activities that ensure they are successfully placed at the correct level. Almost every student completes the course they enrol on. All courses meet the Home Office requirements for Tier 4 students.
- 3.3 The quality of teaching is excellent. Most lessons are outstanding with teachers demonstrating the highest quality lesson planning, reflecting exceptional understanding of their students' individual learning needs and aspirations. Teachers are extremely well-qualified in their subject areas resulting in outstanding levels of student confidence and achievement in classes. English language lessons are meticulously planned. The highest quality resources and an exceptional range of teaching methods are used to create a stimulating and inspiring learning environment. These lessons successfully develop language alongside academic skills, resulting in excellent outcomes for students. The academic programme provides students with exceptional levels of support and challenge and tutorials are extremely effective in developing skills and reinforcing learning. On course assessment is thorough and lessons are planned to ensure individual learning and development needs are achieved. All students demonstrate outstanding enthusiasm, taking responsibility for their learning. They receive excellent individual support and feedback enabling them to take full advantage of the college resources. Students consider that they receive an excellent education at the college and inspectors agree.
- 3.4 Student achievement is high across the school and is excellent on academic programmes. In the main, managers use achievement data well to monitor and support student progress. Students on short-term English language programmes do not take examinations and successful outcomes are not identified or recorded. This restricts the range of information available to monitor and measure the success of this provision.

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 The management and oversight of health and safety is excellent. Policies are clear and thorough and are well communicated across the entire college. All statutory requirements are fulfilled and arrangements for fire safety and first aid are thoroughly organised with meticulous records maintained. Procedures and systems are clear and successfully mitigate risk, ensuring everyone's safety and well-being.
- 4.3 College buildings and facilities are outstanding and provide a safe, secure and very comfortable environment for all. Security arrangements are excellent; facilities are well maintained, and all areas are light, airy and spacious.
- 4.4 The arrangements for safeguarding students are outstanding with exemplary policies that are well promoted to staff and students from their first day at the college. All staff are suitably trained. The college-wide approach to promoting and ensuring safety results in coherent systems, well-managed procedures and thorough records. Great care is taken of all students, and especially those under 18 years.
- 4.5 Students receive outstanding pastoral care. They report feeling very safe in college and in Oxford. They participate in a thorough and well-planned orientation programme, which successfully provides them with information that supports them to take responsibility for their health and safety as well as learning. The arrangements for managing all aspects of accommodation are superb with all statutory procedures and checks undertaken. Students report great satisfaction with the college's management of this aspect. Communication across the college is relaxed, friendly and highly successful and results in concerns being addressed quickly and effectively. Students interviewed consider this a strength of the college. Inspectors agree with this view.
- 4.6 The arrangements for providing guidance on careers and academic progression are exceptional. Significant attention is given to supporting students to consider their personal goals through a range of interesting and thought-provoking activities.
- 4.7 Registration and attendance processes are excellent. They are well managed, recording is accurate and attendance levels are very high. All UK Home Office requirements for Tier 4 visas are successfully met.

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 The recommendation in this area from the previous inspection report is:
- Develop and implement the on-line student feedback forms.
- 5.3 Progress towards the recommendation, measured by management's response, has been excellent. An online feedback process was developed and a range of format trials were completed. However, when piloted, the online questionnaires failed to engage students sufficiently. Consequently, the college has taken the decision not to replace the paper-based system. Managers are now reviewing existing methods of collecting student feedback with a view to developing these. The quality of student feedback obtained is excellent.
- 5.4 Governance is excellent, and there are relationships between the principal and the governors, including the proprietor. The management structure provides clear oversight and coherent leadership that successfully enables the college to fulfil its mission. Leaders provide outstanding direction and support. They successfully promote the academic and cultural ethos. Policies are well researched, well promoted and underpin college activities. Procedures are clearly defined, robustly managed and provide managers with a clear overview of their accountabilities. Resource management is exceptional; the highest regard is given to ensuring students are successful in their programmes and enjoy their time in Oxford.
- 5.5 High quality staff are recruited and staff retention is outstanding. Recruitment processes are exemplary, from the coherent recruitment policy through to new staff induction. Great attention to detail successfully ensures all statutory and college pre-employment checks, including DBS, are undertaken and scrupulous records maintained on the central database.
- 5.6 There are highly successful systems and processes to assess and manage quality assurance. Self-assessment procedures are established and provide managers with accurate performance information. Formal lesson observations for full-time teaching staff are undertaken regularly and provide valuable information on the quality of teaching. While lesson observations are held for all part-time academic staff, personal development targets are not consistently included in the observation feedback document; thus reducing the opportunity to identify and manage professional development opportunities for these staff.
- 5.7 A successful peer observation scheme has recently been introduced providing staff with excellent opportunities to develop their practice.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The college has maintained the excellent quality found at the last inspection.

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Identify and measure successful learning outcomes for students on short-term non-examination English language courses.
- Introduce the peer observation scheme for the foundation courses as part of the continuous improvement cycle.
- Develop the teaching observation scheme for regular part time academic subject staff to support teachers to identify professional development targets.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and held discussions with senior members of staff. 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
Ms Sharon Weston	Team Inspector