



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

MONITORING VISIT

ST CLARE'S OXFORD PFE

(Charity 294085)

Full Name	St Clare's Oxford PFE	
Address	139 Banbury Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX2 7AL	
Telephone Number	01865 552031	
Email Address	dobrila.arezina@stclares.ac.uk	
Website	www.stclares.ac.uk	
Principal	Mr Duncan Reith	
Chair of Governors	Mr Jens Tholstrup	
Age Range	16+	
Total number of students	83	
Numbers by age and type of study	16-18:	08
	18+:	75
	FE only:	32
	EFL only:	22
	EFL and FE:	29
Inspection date	10 December 2024	

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 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 Established in 1953, St Clare's Oxford is a registered educational charity and is also a company limited by guarantee. It comprises two different colleges: an International Baccalaureate College and an International College (IC), both situated in Oxford. Its mission is to advance international education and understanding.
- 1.2 Both colleges are overseen by a single board of governors. The principal, who reports to the governing body, leads both colleges. The vice principal academic oversees the academic courses and the English language teaching operations in both colleges. The vice principal pastoral oversees safeguarding, pastoral care and boarding in both colleges.
- 1.3 The scope of this inspection is limited to the provision in the IC. The college offers an undergraduate programme and a university foundation programme. These courses have fixed enrolment dates twice a year. For these courses, students are required to meet specific entry criteria, as well as having the appropriate English language level.
- 1.4 In addition, the IC offers an English Plus Academic Subjects programme with two entry points for the full semester and one entry point for a short six-week programme in May, as well as English Language courses with multiple entry points throughout the year. The college also offers the Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (DELTA), and a large English language summer programme during the summer months.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection, 83 students were enrolled. There are equal numbers of male and female students. The vast majority of students are aged over 18 and most speak English as an additional language. Students come from a very wide range of countries, including the Netherlands, the United States, and Germany. No students are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.6 The college was previously inspected on the 13 December 2022 when it met all Key Standards and the quality of education was judged to exceed expectations. The recommendation from the previous report is:
 - Enhance management information data to help managers monitor and respond to trends in students' overall progression throughout their course.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations.** At the previous inspection of the 13 December 2022 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. Students are well educated in a highly supportive atmosphere and in accordance with the college's aims. Initial assessment prior to, and upon arrival, is excellent and accurately places students on the most appropriate course in accordance with their English language and/or academic abilities. The suitability of the course provision and curriculum is excellent. The college offers a wide range of high-quality courses that meet students' needs and educational aspirations. Courses are well organized, flexible and designed well to ensure students effectively develop their subject knowledge and skills. Courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. Teaching is excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, are well qualified in their subject disciplines; often holding a relevant doctorate. They are experienced practitioners and use a wide range of highly effective teaching methods to help students to build new knowledge and apply this effectively to new contexts and, where relevant, future examination questions. Students appreciate the small class sizes and high levels of individual academic support from teachers. Their progress is carefully monitored to ensure that they are successfully progressing towards their learning aims. As a result, students make excellent progress in class and achievement rates in examinations are very high.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. The college premises are of a very high quality, well maintained and provide a safe environment for students to learn and staff to work. Classrooms and other areas of the college are well equipped and furnished to an excellent standard. Comprehensive policies and procedures are effectively implemented to reduce the risks from fire and other hazards and to ensure that high levels of health and safety are maintained. Fire precautions, drills and evacuations are systematically undertaken and accurately recorded. Student registration and attendance records are excellent. They are accurate, well managed and are highly effective in monitoring attendance and taking action when required. Procedures for reporting to the Home Office are highly secure. Pastoral support and guidance for the students is excellent. Highly effective systems for monitoring student wellbeing and providing prompt, personalised support are in place. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students report that they feel safe and very well supported at the college.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The board of governors provides excellent oversight and discharges their responsibilities well for financial planning and investment in the future. Governors pay regular visits to the college, observing classes, meeting students and getting to know staff members. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the day-to-day operations of the college and provide advice and guidance when needed. The college is highly successful in

attracting and retaining highly qualified and experienced teachers and other staff. Leadership and management are excellent. Leaders and managers understand their roles and responsibilities and provide very clear educational direction. They are highly effective in ensuring that high levels of teaching, welfare and health and safety are maintained and that the college is well run and meet all its legal obligations. Managers have an accurate understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further development. The views of students are systematically sought and any areas for improvement identified are acted upon. Procedures for the recruitment of staff are excellent, in accordance with legal requirements, with all appropriate checks undertaken. As a result, all required employment and suitability checks are completed on staff before their employment is confirmed. The college's website provides students with accurate information about the courses on offer and its facilities.

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 Students are well educated in a highly supportive atmosphere and in accordance with the college's aims. Initial assessment prior to, and upon arrival, is excellent and accurately places students on the most appropriate course in accordance with their English language and/or academic abilities. As a result, students report that they are highly satisfied with their course.
- 3.3 The suitability of the course provision and curriculum is excellent. The college offers a wide range of high-quality courses that meet student's needs and educational aspirations. The curriculum is based on a clear policy statement and well-supported by appropriate plans to ensure an excellent learning experience for the students. Courses are well organized, flexible and designed well to ensure students effectively develop the subject knowledge and skills needed to be successful in their programme of study. English language courses are clearly linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). The college effectively ensures that students enrolled on Student visas are studying at an appropriate level on an approved full-time programme which includes at least 15 hours a week of classroom-based, weekday daytime study.
- 3.4 Teaching is excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, are well qualified in their subject disciplines; often holding a relevant doctorate. Lessons are very well planned, with considerable care taken to match tasks to individual students levels of English language and academic ability.
- 3.5 Teachers are experienced practitioners and use a wide range of highly effective teaching methods to help students to build new knowledge and apply this effectively to new contexts and, where relevant, future examination questions. Students benefit from small class sizes and high levels of individual academic support from teachers. They are highly motivated, focused and enthusiastic. Students are keen to offer their views and opinions and engage very effectively in discussions and debates their teachers incorporate into lessons. They work well individually and in small groups, showing good co-operative learning and independence. However, in a very small number of classes, teachers do not start the lesson at the scheduled time, which reduces the learning opportunities available to the students. Classroom resources are of a very good quality, quantity and range and are used effectively by teachers to support learning.
- 3.6 Overall, students make excellent progress. Students progress is carefully monitored to ensure that they are successfully progressing towards their learning aims. Those on English language programmes develop their applied speaking, listening, reading and writing skills very well. Students on the university foundation programme successfully progress to higher level study at their university of choice.

- 3.7 Teaching is inclusive and effectively promotes fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It encourages respect for other people including the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

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 college's premises are of a very high quality, well maintained and provide a safe environment for students to learn and staff to work. The college implements comprehensive arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. Managers consult regularly with students to obtain their views on safety, welfare and the quality and maintenance of the premises. Classrooms and other areas of the college are well equipped and furnished to an excellent standard. Detailed policies and procedures are effectively implemented to reduce the risks from fire and other hazards and to ensure that high levels of health and safety are maintained. Fire precautions, drills and evacuations are systematically undertaken and accurately recorded. An appropriate number of fire marshals and staff trained in first aid are in place. Free drinking water is readily available throughout the college. The ground floor of the premises is easily accessible to staff and students, including those with disabilities.
- 4.3 Systems for recording registration and attendance are excellent. Detailed admission and attendance procedures ensure that accurate admission registers and records are maintained. Paper based and electronic student files are accurately maintained and provide a clear record of checks on identification, previous academic experience, and visa status. Attendance records are accurate, and daily attendance is closely monitored. Procedures for reporting to the Home Office are highly secure and fully understood by relevant staff. Overall, student attendance is very high. There are clear and fair procedures for the collection and refund of fees and deposits.
- 4.4 Pastoral support and guidance for the students is excellent. Highly effective systems ensure that each student's wellbeing is effectively monitored and prompt, personalised support is provided when required. A wide range of appropriate policies and procedures help to ensure that the college provides a safe and supportive environment where students can progress quickly. On arrival students receive a comprehensive induction which is effective in helping them settle quickly in their programme of study, the college and the Oxford area. Relationships between staff and students, and amongst the students themselves, are excellent with a strong culture of mutual respect, integration and tolerance. In meetings with students and responses to questionnaires they report that they feel safe and very well supported.
- 4.5 The safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 are excellent. Safeguarding has a high priority at the college, with a named governor allocated to provide oversight and support. Arrangements have proper regard to official guidance and the implementation of safeguarding and recruitment strategies are appropriately checked and regularly reviewed by senior managers. There is a designated child protection officer in place who is trained to the required level. All staff that have access to students under the age of 18 are subject to an appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) suitability check prior to or on appointment.

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:
- Enhance management information data to help managers monitor and respond to trends in students' overall progression throughout their course.
- 5.3 Excellent progress has been made against the first recommendation. The college has introduced a new management information system which provides a comprehensive overview of student grades over the course of each term. This, combined with regular teacher meetings, both formal and informal, and the personal tutor system, enables the college to identify any progression issue promptly and take any required action.
- 5.4 The board of governors provides excellent oversight and discharges their responsibilities well for financial planning and investment in the future. Governors pay regular visits to the college, observing classes, meeting students and getting to know staff members. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the day-to-day operations of the college and provide advice and guidance when needed. The college is highly successful in attracting and retaining highly qualified and experienced teachers and other staff. Leadership and management are excellent.
- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is excellent. A comprehensive and well-developed management structure ensures that leaders and managers understand their roles and responsibilities. They provide very clear educational direction and are highly effective in ensuring that high levels of teaching, welfare and health and safety are maintained. As a result, the college is well run and meets all its legal obligations. Managers have an accurate understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further development. Highly effective communication within the college ensures that staff are well informed of any issues or changes. Performance data are used effectively to evaluate the provision and to highlight key issues for leaders and managers. The views of students are systematically sought and any areas for improvement identified are acted upon.
- 5.6 Procedures for the recruitment of staff are excellent, in accordance with legal requirements, with all appropriate checks undertaken. As a result, all required employment and suitability checks are completed on staff before their employment is confirmed. The college's website provides students with accurate information about the courses on offer and its facilities.
- 5.7 The provision of information is excellent. The college's website is clear and user-friendly. Prospective students are able to access accurate and relevant information to inform their study choices. The college was highly responsive in providing information for the inspection in a timely manner.

6. ACTIONS AND 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:

- Ensure that all lessons start at the scheduled time.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with staff and students. They held discussions with senior leaders, the principal, members of staff, students and attended registration sessions. 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
Ms Jane Beeson	Team Inspector
Dr David Gutmann	Team Inspector