



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

BELL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES LTD

(Company Registration Number 07169627)

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Principal	Mr Frank Pinner (Cambridge) Mr Jonathan Richards (London)
Proprietor	The Bell Educational Trust
Age Range	16+
Total number of students	39
	16 – 18 3
	18+: 36
	EFL only: 34
	EFL and FE: 5
Inspection dates	22 – 24 June 2021

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 Bell Educational Services Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Bell Educational Trust, which grew from Bell International College, founded in Cambridge by Frank Bell in 1955. It aims to change lives by providing education, training and cultural experiences for students from around the world. Courses for adults are run at schools in Cambridge and London. A year-round school for groups is located at St Albans. Short summer programmes for children are run at St Albans and in centres in different locations rented for the summer. The scope of this inspection is limited to the adult provision in Cambridge and London.
- 1.2 The group's head office is located on the Cambridge school site. Both schools are governed by the Bell Educational Services Ltd board of directors. The senior management team of the organisation is composed of the chief executive, the finance director, the director of sales and marketing and the head of operations. The head of operations is also the principal of the Cambridge school. The principals are responsible for the day-to-day running of the schools.
- 1.3 The schools offer courses in English as a foreign language (EFL) to adults. Students aged 16 and above can join adult classes. General English is offered at a range of levels, and preparation courses for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Cambridge main suite examinations are available to students who have reached an appropriate level. A range of specialist optional courses and one-to-one tuition is also provided. University foundation programmes (UFP) with a wide range of subject specialisms and a masters' degree preparation course are available at Cambridge. Both schools offer teacher training courses leading to the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) and teacher development courses for teachers from overseas. The Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (DELTA) is available online, with the face-to-face element delivered at the Cambridge school. Enrolment for EFL courses is continuous, while the other courses have specific start dates and entry requirements.
- 1.4 Both schools offer accommodation in student residences and in homestay. Since the previous inspection, a second residence accommodating 17 students has been created on the Cambridge site. The London school is currently sharing its teaching premises with another school.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection the range of courses being delivered and the number of students enrolled were limited due to international restrictions on travel. The UFP was in its final examination week. Face-to-face general English and IELTS courses were ongoing at both schools and general English courses and one-to-one tuition were being delivered online. In total, 39 students were enrolled, with 14 of these following online courses. The largest nationality group was Belgian, with small groups from Turkey, China and Qatar. The remaining students came from a wide range of countries. The majority were male and most were over the age of 18. All spoke English as an additional language. There were no students identified with learning difficulties or disabilities.

- 1.6 The schools were last inspected on 5 June 2018 when they met all key standards and the quality of education was judged to exceed expectations.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The language school 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. Initial assessment is excellent and leads to appropriate placement in classes. Assessment information is used effectively by teachers to plan and to provide well targeted support for students. Course provision is excellent and meets students' needs very well. The courses on offer to students on student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in Home Office guidance. Teaching is excellent and enables students to maximise their progress. Teachers know their students well and provide high levels of individual challenge in well planned, engaging lessons. Assessment is timely, reliable and consistent. Consequently, students are aware of their progress and what they need to do to improve. Regular tutorials promote independent learning. Effective measures are in place to support students with additional learning needs if required. Teaching 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 those with the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Very effective health and safety arrangements are in place. Fire safety is excellent. The premises are of high quality, and provide very good environments for teaching and learning. Admission and attendance records are accurate. Attendance monitoring is rigorous and levels of attendance and course completion are very high. Lateness is suitably addressed and recorded. Appropriate procedures are in place for reporting to the Home Office on students enrolled through the student visa route. Pastoral support is excellent. Comprehensive support is available and students know who to go to with any issues. Careers advice is a particular strength. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent and understood by all staff. Accommodation in student residences and home stay is well managed, safe and secure. On-site residences at Cambridge are of high standard. Outcomes of checks on external residences are not consistently maintained.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. Strategic direction and oversight by the board is highly effective and ensures that the schools' aims and ethos are met. Financial planning is very effective and results in good provision of resources. Responsibilities are appropriately delegated within a clear management structure and communication throughout the organisation is excellent. Self-evaluation is accurate. Priorities for development are appropriately identified and decisions are effectively implemented. Educational direction is outstanding and results in excellent academic provision. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous and support continuous improvement. Any complaints are effectively addressed through an appropriate procedure. Performance management of staff is excellent and is well linked to high-quality continuous professional development (CPD). Staff

recruitment procedures are excellent. All required checks are made on applicants prior to appointment and are appropriately recorded. The quality of staff throughout the organisation is high.

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 or on arrival is excellent. Very effective procedures are in place to accurately evaluate language ability and to understand the aims and learning needs of students so that they gain maximum benefit from their course.
- 3.2 For entry to general English and examination classes, information from the online initial assessment and a face-to-face interview are used effectively to place students on the most suitable course and to provide any necessary support from the outset of their studies.
- 3.3 For UFP and Masters' preparation programme (MPP) students, specialist staff work with applicants prior to enrolment to determine whether the course is the best route to admission to their intended higher education programme. In addition to assessment of their English, previous academic records are carefully reviewed and, where necessary, qualifications from their home countries are checked for comparability through the UK National Information Centre for Global Qualifications and Skills (UK ENIC) service.
- 3.4 Initial assessment information is well recorded and shared with academic staff to inform planning. As a result, teachers demonstrate very good knowledge of their students. There is flexibility within courses so that general English students can move to a different level where this proves to be appropriate, and UFP students can change to a different subject specialism early in the course.
- 3.5 Applicants obtain detailed, accurate information about courses from the Bell English website and from agents, who are provided with regular updates on provision. Staff respond promptly to any enquiries via the website or by email. Students are positive about the information and advice they received.
- 3.6 There are very effective procedures for the identification of students with additional needs or disabilities prior to and on arrival. Teaching staff are well trained to recognise students' additional learning needs and provide suitable support when required to maximise their progress.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.7 Suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. The Bell English has a clear statement of educational purpose and follows a specific approach to teaching and learning designed to provide the best possible learning experience for students. As a result, students are very well educated in accordance with their objectives and the schools' aims.

- 3.8 The range of general English courses and examination courses provided effectively promotes progression. English language courses are based on appropriate syllabuses, which are benchmarked to the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR). Schemes of work are highly responsive to individual student needs and make effective use of up-to-date course materials. The UFP and MPP programmes are appropriately designed to support students to gain entrance to universities in the UK and abroad. Academic subject areas for the UFP are aligned to demand, and external moderation of courses ensures that on completion of their course students are suitably prepared for their next steps. The CELTA courses run at both schools and the DELTA at Cambridge provide opportunities for progression in teaching EFL.
- 3.9 Course provision is accurately represented on the schools' website. The courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in Home Office guidance.
- 3.10 Students enjoy their experience at the schools and are very satisfied with their courses. As a result, almost all complete the course for which they originally register.

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

- 3.11 Teaching is excellent and enables students to maximise their progress. Teachers are very experienced and knowledgeable. Planning reflects very good understanding of the needs, aptitudes cultural background and prior attainments of their students. Clear objectives are shared with the class and are appropriately linked to previous learning. Classroom management is excellent and pace is responsive to student needs. Teachers encourage participation and co-operative learning, thus building their confidence. Questioning is used effectively to check and extend learning and opportunities for pronunciation work and error correction are consistently exploited. Teachers make effective use of technology to enhance learning. As a result, students are highly engaged and suitably challenged.
- 3.12 Assessment is excellent. Timely, reliable and consistent assessment on all courses produces detailed information of students' progress. It is used effectively to inform planning and provide excellent individual support. General English classes have weekly progress tests which identify strengths and areas for improvement. Regular tutorials promote self-reflection and support students in planning their self-study. Individual targets are agreed and are subsequently reviewed. This effectively promotes achievement of personal learning goals and maximises individual progress.
- 3.13 Homework is set regularly and appropriately marked using consistent criteria. Constructive feedback informs students on how to improve. Marking of initial drafts of UFP assessed writing is effective in raising attainment in the submitted assignment.
- 3.14 The teaching does not undermine the 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 those with the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

- 3.15 Classroom resources are excellent. Classrooms are fitted with electronic white boards and computers, providing useful access to course book resources and to the internet. A good range of additional published resources are available to teachers. Resources are used to very good effect in most lessons.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.16 Attainment and progress are excellent. Progress is effectively tracked through regular assessments with outcomes recorded on Bell Online. Easily accessible centralised recording allows for close monitoring by teachers, managers and the students themselves. Teachers use assessment outcomes effectively in lesson planning and in provision of additional individual support where necessary. Long-term students receive reports every six weeks with teacher comments detailing their current attainment. These provide a helpful measure of progress for parents and sponsors.
- 3.17 The majority of students on general English and examination preparation courses make good or excellent progress against their starting points. There are consistently high levels of attainment on the UFP and MPP courses resulting in successful progression into higher education. Almost all CELTA trainees qualify.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

- 4.1 Health, safety and security of premises are excellent. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of students and staff in the teaching and residential premises. Health and safety are given high priority by senior management, who are advised by a specialist provider. An appropriate range of risk assessments is undertaken regularly with all identified risks promptly addressed. Suitable risk assessments are conducted for external activities.
- 4.2 All necessary measures are undertaken to reduce risk of fire. Signage is clear and suitably located. There are sufficient trained fire marshals at both schools. Regular checks are made on fire safety equipment, and emergency evacuation drills are conducted regularly. Records are well maintained. Effective arrangements are in place for the evacuation of people with disabilities at the Cambridge school. Restricted access at the London school prevents admission of students with mobility difficulties.
- 4.3 First aid provision is very good. A clear first aid policy is in place and is implemented effectively. There are sufficient, suitably trained first aiders and arrangements for first aid are well communicated to students. Any incidents are logged electronically on a central record and action is taken where appropriate. Students report that they feel safe at the school.
- 4.4 School premises are fit for purpose, suitably secure and provide very good environments for teaching and learning. The Cambridge school is spacious and has a range of excellent facilities for students. It is set in extensive, well-kept grounds. The smaller London school is in a central location, offering easy access to a range of London attractions and amenities, which are effectively exploited in course enrichment activities.
- 4.5 Access to both schools is suitable for the students they enrol. Premises are very well equipped and maintained to a high standard. There are sufficient washrooms for staff and students at both schools, with appropriate facilities for those with special needs and disabilities at Cambridge. Free drinking water is available. The Cambridge canteen has excellent facilities for the hygienic preparation, serving and consumption of food. London does not have a canteen but provides a kitchen for student use with appropriate facilities to make hot drinks, store and heat food. Premises, including residences, are well decorated, tidy and clean. Lighting, heating and sound insulation are good. Furniture and fittings are appropriate and well designed.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.6 Student registration and attendance records are excellent. Appropriate admission procedures are followed meticulously, ensuring that the schools hold all required information on their students.

- 4.7 Student registration and attendance records are accurate and very well maintained. Attendance is recorded electronically and is monitored effectively by managers. An appropriate attendance and punctuality policy is well communicated to students and staff. Absence and lateness are addressed promptly. Students who are late are permitted to join their classes, but all time lost is deducted from their attendance rates, which are reported to parents and sponsors where appropriate. This is very effective. As a result, attendance and punctuality rates are excellent and course completion rates are high.
- 4.8 Fair and clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees are published on the website.
- 4.9 Appropriate procedures are in place for monitoring and reporting to the Home Office on students enrolled through the student visa route.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.10 Pastoral support for students is excellent and effectively meets students' needs. The schools aim to provide the best support to students. To achieve this, they invest appropriately in the development of staff and have established well-coordinated and effective procedures for monitoring student wellbeing. There is a strong culture of care among the staff, and relationships throughout the schools are very positive.
- 4.11 Students are able to access useful information about their school and its policies prior to arrival through Bell Online. They receive a comprehensive induction on arrival, which enables them to settle quickly onto their course and into life in Cambridge or London.
- 4.12 Personal support for students is outstanding. Any support needs are identified at an early stage, with staff working collaboratively to address them. Welfare concerns are appropriately logged and monitored. A wide range of support is available on personal issues from within the schools, or where more appropriate from external specialists. Class sizes are small and students benefit from high levels of individual support in their studies. Staff responsible for welfare make regular checks on students to elicit any concerns or difficulties. Students confirm that they know who to go to with any concerns and spoke very positively about the high levels of care and support they receive.
- 4.13 A range of policies effectively promote the Bell values of tolerance and mutual respect. Issues such as mental health, bullying and peer-on-peer abuse, are raised through posters displayed in classrooms and residences, with sources of support identified. Students are given clear guidelines regarding British values and the standards of behaviour expected of them and these are consistently promoted by staff.
- 4.14 Effective arrangements are in place to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. All staff have received awareness training and demonstrate suitable understanding of the procedures for reporting concerns.

- 4.15 Social programmes at both schools are highly responsive to the needs of students and provide activities that engage them socially and culturally. The range of activities offered enhances students' learning experience and enables them to make the most of their time in the UK.
- 4.16 Provision of careers advice from the university counselling manager is excellent. Students receive high levels of individually tailored advice and guidance, which enable them to make informed choices about their progression to further study and future employment. Additional support with curriculum vitae writing and job applications is provided by teachers in skills lessons, or through enrichment workshops at the Cambridge school.

4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s

- 4.17 Safeguarding for under 18s is excellent. Comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures are effectively communicated to staff, regularly reviewed and consistently implemented. All staff received good levels of training in safeguarding, and on the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Training is regularly updated in line with government guidance. Staff demonstrate an excellent awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities and fulfil them very well.
- 4.18 Safeguarding has a high profile with senior leadership, who seek to achieve standards that go beyond compliance. They are supported in this strategy by external experts. The Designated Safeguard Lead and deputies at each school are trained to the required level and ensure that safeguarding informs all aspects of provision. Safeguarding is effectively monitored by suitably trained members of the board.
- 4.19 All staff and board members have undergone enhanced suitability checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- 4.20 The London school is currently sharing its premises with another school. Arrangements ensure that the health, safety and welfare of students are safeguarded and their education is not interrupted by other users.

4.(e) Residential accommodation (if applicable)

- 4.21 Residential accommodation is excellent. The Cambridge school offers accommodation in two secure, well-maintained residences located within its grounds and registered in accordance with national standards. The larger one is a newly modernised building providing high quality accommodation. They are well equipped and comfortable, with good facilities for socialising which enhance the students' experience at the school. Students benefit from living within the school's grounds, where they can make use of an all-weather football pitch and a well-equipped common room, and take part in activities such as barbecues. Provision for health and safety of the residences is excellent.

- 4.22 Both schools use externally managed residences. Health, safety and security arrangements for these are appropriately monitored by school staff and regular visits are made to ensure the continued good quality of provision. These checks are not consistently recorded. Accommodation in residences is usually available only to students aged over 18. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been necessary to accommodate under 18s completing UFP courses in a commercially operated residence specially designated for under 18s. All appropriate safeguarding measures have been in place, with high levels of monitoring by residence staff and the school student services manager.
- 4.23 Accommodation in homestay is temporarily suspended but there is provision for high standard accommodation, which effectively meets students' needs. Appropriate arrangements are in place to make and record all necessary checks on homestay homes. There are clear guidelines regarding expected standards of provision and advice on welfare. Arrangements for the accommodation of under 18s with host families are very effective and meet safeguarding requirements. Enhanced DBS checks are made on all relevant members of the families who host under 18s and these are suitably recorded. Hosts receive very effective training in safeguarding, including identifying the signs of radicalisation and extremism.
- 4.24 Students report that they are happy with their accommodation. Any concerns or complaints about student accommodation are appropriately logged and promptly addressed.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight are excellent. The board of Bell Educational Services Ltd sets very high standards for the schools and communicates these effectively through strategy documents and in regular meetings with staff. They have good insight into the working of the schools and monitor the quality of provision closely. Strategic direction is excellent and results in achievement of the Bell English aims and ethos.
- 5.2 Financial planning is robust and allows for good levels of investment in staff, accommodation and resources. Risk is appropriately assessed and managed. This has enabled the schools to maintain their high standards through the recent period of changes resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.3 Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and reviewed regularly for effectiveness. They are well disseminated and consistently implemented.
- 5.4 Responsibilities are appropriately delegated and there are clear channels of reporting throughout the organisation. Relationships between the board and the school principals are positive. As a result, the board fully discharges its responsibilities for safeguarding and for welfare, health and safety in the schools and ensures that all relevant legislative requirements and statutory duties are fulfilled.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.5 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. Leaders and managers are suitably experienced and highly effective in their roles. Lines of responsibility are clear and channels of communication are very good throughout the organisation. Leadership is open and supportive, which secures the loyalty and commitment of staff.
- 5.6 Educational direction is outstanding and results in achievement of excellent standards in academic provision. The educational steering group provides a coherent plan for the development of teaching and learning. This is effectively disseminated to staff at all levels and very good resources are provided to implement it.
- 5.7 Self-evaluation is accurate and demonstrates excellent awareness of the schools' strengths and areas for development. Leadership is effective in identifying priorities and setting challenging targets to address them. Decisions are very effectively implemented.
- 5.8 Staff throughout the organisation are of high quality. Their performance is suitably monitored and they are well supported by managers, who ensure that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of students. Regular, minuted team meetings are effective in keeping staff informed of developments and eliciting

their input for planning improvements. Relationships amongst staff and managers at all levels are excellent and contribute effectively to fulfilment of the Bell English mission.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.9 Quality assurance including student feedback is excellent. There is a strong culture of excellence throughout the organisation, which results in continuous evaluation of performance and improvement planning.
- 5.10 Feedback is very effectively gathered, collated and used to inform improvements. Feedback is taken regularly from students through a range of suitable means. Data from student surveys is analysed and shared with staff. Where satisfaction levels decline below a specified point, action is taken to identify and address underlying issues. Informal feedback is gathered regularly from students and staff respond promptly to address their concerns. Suggestions by students are used to make improvements to provision, for example, the introduction of practical projects in afternoon classes at the London school.
- 5.11 Student responses to pre-inspection questionnaires and in meetings with inspectors indicate high levels of satisfaction with the provision.
- 5.12 Staff provide feedback regularly through team meetings, the staff forum and online surveys. Staff report that managers are responsive to their views and take up their suggestions when this is possible.
- 5.13 Data on student attendance, progress and achievement is used appropriately to review and improve the effectiveness of courses.
- 5.14 Performance management of teaching staff is excellent. Outstanding procedures for formal and informal lesson observations provide detailed information on the quality of teaching and learning at the schools. This supports provision of highly quality, well-targeted CPD. Learning platforms are used effectively to provide access to training resources. The excellence of these procedures has been demonstrated in the preparation of teachers to deliver lessons online during the past year. Teachers appreciate the high levels of support available to them from advanced practitioners and managers.
- 5.15 Appraisal procedures for all staff are thorough and very effective in identifying areas for development to meet individual needs and achieve strategic targets. Staff are supported financially to take higher level qualifications to further raise standards.
- 5.16 A clear complaints procedure is in place and is readily available to students. Complaints are well recorded on a central log and tracked through to resolution. Managers act promptly and appropriately to deal with any issues that arise. An independent adjudicator is identified in case of complaints that cannot be resolved.
- 5.17 Students have access to a fee protection scheme.

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

- 5.18 Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are excellent. The organisation follows a policy of safer recruitment and has provided suitable training in this to all staff working in human resources or involved in interviewing job applicants. All staff have undergone relevant checks prior to appointment, or retrospectively in the case of long serving employees. Checks include identity and proof of right to work in the UK, enhanced DBS and barred list checks. References are taken up prior to confirmation of appointment. Checks are systematically recorded on a single central record of appointments and appropriate evidence is kept in staff files.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.19 Provision of information is excellent. Information on the website is detailed and accurate. It supports students in selecting the most appropriate school and course to meet their learning goals. The website contains all information specified in the Standards.
- 5.20 The school provided all the information required by inspectors in a timely fashion.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

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

- Systematically record regular checks made by the schools on externally operated student residences to ensure continued high standards of provision.

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 Chief Executive Officer. 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 organisation.

Inspectors

Ms Dawn Hart	Lead Inspector
Ms Ann O'Toole	Team Inspector
Mrs Jane Roy	Team Inspector