



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

ALBEMARLE INDEPENDENT COLLEGE

(Company Registration Number 3387138)

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. The college has clear educational aims and objectives and offers a wide range of very high quality courses that fully meets the needs of the students and provides clear progression routes into higher education. Courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. Initial assessment prior to, and on arrival, is excellent and accurately places students on the most appropriate course in accordance with their abilities and future aspirations. Students are supported by excellent teaching and a very well-planned curriculum. Teachers have comprehensive subject knowledge and use highly effective teaching methods to motivate and keep the students' interest. As a result, students make excellent progress across the range of courses. Regular assessments are used very effectively to check student progress and to provide teachers with up-to-date information to ensure that they effectively plan to meet students' needs. Overall, students' achievement and attendance are excellent and punctuality good. However, a very small number of students who arrive late to lessons are not always challenged effectively.
- 2.3 Arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of students are excellent. Health and safety is very well managed, with highly effective monitoring and oversight ensuring that any issues are quickly addressed. The college's buildings are very well maintained and provide high quality facilities that effectively support learning. Comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures are in place and implemented effectively to ensure 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 excellent. They 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 the students in accordance with its aims. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Comprehensive arrangements are in place for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18, which reflect official guidance. Students report that they are happy, safe and extremely well supported.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The proprietors are highly effective in ensuring that high levels of education, welfare, health and safety are maintained. A clear vision for the college is shared by senior leaders and staff, who work very well together for the good of the students. A detailed management structure, with well-defined roles and responsibilities, ensures that the college is well run, meets all its legal obligations and quality assurance is prioritised. A comprehensive process of self-assessment and evaluation effectively informs improvement planning and ensures that the necessary resources are in place

to meet the changing needs of the college. Systems to ensure consistent assessment and the monitoring of student progress are excellent. The college successfully attracts highly qualified and experienced administrators, teachers and managers. Procedures for the recruitment of staff are excellent, in accordance with legal requirements, 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. Entry criteria are detailed and used very effectively to provide accurate and appropriate advice and guidance to prospective students. On arrival, students undergo a comprehensive assessment programme, including an interview with a senior manager, to ensure they have the appropriate level of ability for their selected programme of study. As a result, initial assessment is highly accurate and students are very satisfied with their placements.
- 3.2 Regular mock examinations and tutorials effectively identify any issues that students may have with the demands of their chosen courses. Teachers make excellent use of this information to guide their lesson planning and provide any necessary support or guidance.
- 3.3 High quality information, advice and guidance are made available to students through the college website. The website is detailed, professional and includes accurate information about the college, its premises and the curriculum on offer. Students confirm that they are highly satisfied with the pre-enrolment advice they receive.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. Students are well educated in accordance with the college's aims and their objectives. The curriculum is broad, very carefully planned and meets the different needs and aspirations of students. The range of courses available provides students with excellent progression opportunities into higher education. As a result, retention on all courses is high, with almost all students completing their programme of study successfully.
- 3.5 The courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in 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 is excellent. Detailed planning, and an extensive understanding of the needs of their students, allows teachers to successfully adapt lessons to meet individual learning needs and effectively challenge students. Teachers use a wide range of highly effective learning activities and resources which engage and motivate students. As a result, students make very high levels of progress in relation to their ability and starting points.
- 3.7 Teachers are very well qualified, highly experienced and have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject. Relationships at all levels are extremely

productive, with teachers and students working collaboratively to enhance learning and progress. Lessons are well paced and provide excellent opportunities for students to participate. Teachers ask searching questions that prompt students to think and respond successfully. Students work very well in groups, showing excellent co-operative learning.

- 3.8 Teachers readily offer individual help and support to ensure high levels of subject skills, knowledge and understanding are developed. Lessons address the needs of students through tasks designed to meet their varying abilities. The high expectations of teachers ensure that all students are consistently challenged and well supported to meet their learning goals. The use of technology to enhance learning in the classroom is excellent and is used well to stimulate students to explore ideas and further develop their understanding of the subject.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 Assessment is regular and thorough, accurately identifying strengths and weaknesses in students' progress and highlights areas for improvement. Feedback to students is positive, encouraging and accurate. It clearly identifies areas for improvement. Students are encouraged to continue their learning outside of lessons, with regular setting of homework. As a result, students effectively develop their confidence and independence.
- 3.11 Arrangements for tracking students' progress are excellent. The progress of each student is very carefully tracked, allowing students, teachers and managers to monitor their progress effectively. Tutorials are held regularly and effectively support students to review their progress.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.12 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 subjects, demonstrating excellent levels of knowledge and understanding. The evidence from lesson observations 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. Most students successfully progress onto higher education courses at their chosen university. Students report that they are extremely happy with their progress.
- 3.13 Attendance levels are excellent and punctuality good. However, a very small number of students who arrive late to lessons are not always challenged effectively.

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. A wide range of very detailed policies and procedures is in place to ensure the health and safety of students and staff, and that the premises are secure. The buildings are fit-for-purpose and very well maintained. They provide a well-resourced learning environment which enhances the students' education. Classrooms are spacious, light and well furnished. All electrical equipment is tested regularly as required. Toilet facilities are adequate in number and very well maintained. Security arrangements are excellent. As a result, students report that they feel safe, secure and comfortable.
- 4.2 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. These conform to requirements. 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 which 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. Free drinking water is readily available throughout the college. Staff and students report that they 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. The college is not accessible by wheelchair users or students with mobility difficulties. This is made aware to all prospective students.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.4 Arrangements for student registration and the recording of attendance are excellent. Detailed admission procedures are in place and properly observed. A central register is accurately maintained and individual student files contain all required information.
- 4.5 Daily attendance is accurately recorded and very closely monitored, with all unexpected absences followed up the same day. Relevant staff have a clear understanding of Home Office requirements regarding the enrolment and attendance requirements for students who are studying under Student visa arrangements. Accurate student records are maintained on the college's database and in students' individual files.
- 4.6 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

- 4.7 Pastoral support for students is excellent. Highly effective personal support and guidance is provided by staff in accordance with the students' needs. A comprehensive induction, and system of progress reviews and attendance reports, ensures that students' personal and academic development is reviewed regularly. As a result, students know who to go to if they have a personal problem and feel confident to approach members of staff for help.
- 4.8 Relationships between staff and students and amongst the students themselves are excellent, with a strong culture of mutual respect, integration and tolerance. A wide range of policies and procedures reinforce this culture and the expectations of behaviour and conduct. The college has clear anti-bullying and harassment policies and procedures, and students report no instances of such behaviour. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and meetings with students, show that they feel that the college is providing them with a very safe and comfortable environment which is highly effective in meeting their learning needs. As a result, they would recommend the college to others.
- 4.9 Comprehensive careers advice ensures that students are very well prepared for further study choices and life beyond the college. Students value and regularly participate in a wide range of high quality enrichment and social activities which effectively enhances their learning.

4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s

- 4.10 Safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 are excellent. The arrangements follow the current national statutory guidance for the safe recruitment of staff and maintenance of associated records. A detailed and appropriate safeguarding policy is in place and effectively implemented. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) suitability checks have been completed and recorded for all relevant staff. The central record of safeguarding checks is accurate and complete. All staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding. An appropriately trained child protection officer is in place and guidance on e-safety and measures to prevent extremism and radicalisation are well considered and addressed.

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 very high academic standards. They effectively monitor performance and provide excellent support to staff. The educational direction of the college is clear and fully understood by staff. 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 proprietors, managers and staff are excellent.
- 5.2 Financial management is excellent. Detailed financial planning, and excellent investment in staff, premises and resources, effectively contributes 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

- 5.3 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. The quality of leadership and management is excellent. Self-evaluation is rigorous and provides an accurate account of the college's key strengths and areas for development. Leaders are highly successful in sharing the organisational vision with staff and all decisions and actions consider the impact on the student experience and their needs.
- 5.4 A detailed management structure ensures that highly effective policies and procedures are effectively implemented and monitored. The structure operates well and provides clearly defined roles and responsibilities and excellent lines of communication. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meetings with staff show that they are very supportive of the college.
- 5.5 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. An excellent programme of staff development is in place to ensure they are appropriately trained for their roles.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.6 Quality assurance including student feedback is excellent. Managers are very successful in identifying priorities for improvement. Self-evaluation is well developed, resulting in a clear and realistic analysis of strengths and areas for development. Student feedback is regularly and systematically collected. 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. Student performance data is available and effectively summarised to ensure key issues are highlighted for leaders and managers.

- 5.7 The complaints procedure is clear and appropriate. Complaints are few and students confirmed that they are aware of the policy.

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

- 5.8 Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are excellent. An appropriate recruitment policy is in place that ensures that well qualified and very experienced staff are recruited. All required recruitment checks have been carried out in a timely manner and appropriately recorded. The process to validate references and qualifications is excellent, with due regard to statutory requirements concerning the identity of staff. A comprehensive central record is maintained and monitored by senior staff.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.9 The 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.
- 5.10 The college was very responsive in providing information for the inspection in a timely manner.