



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

**ALBEMARLE INDEPENDENT COLLEGE**

**(3387138)**

## **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 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.

## 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Key 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. The process is accurate and a wide range of tests and interviews ensures that students are placed on a programme of study in accordance with their needs and academic abilities. Any special educational needs are effectively identified, with any required learning support arrangements being put in place quickly. The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. Students are very well educated in accordance with the college's aims and their objectives. The curriculum is based on a clear policy statement, is well planned and provides a comprehensive range of UK Advanced Level programmes and General Certificate of Secondary Education courses to meet the different needs of students. Programmes of study on offer to Tier 4 students meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. Teaching is excellent and is characterised by detailed planning. Students benefit from small class sizes, with teachers taking considerable care to plan tasks to meet each student's needs. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and pedagogical skills and use highly effective teaching methods to deliver engaging and student-focused lessons. Regular assessments are used effectively to check student progress to ensure that they are successfully progressing towards their learning aims. Overall, students make excellent progress given their starting points.
- 2.3 Arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of students are excellent. Health and safety and security are well managed, monitored, and with comprehensive oversight, ensuring that any issues are quickly addressed. The premises are fit for purpose, well-maintained and of a high quality. A high level of fire safety is maintained. Fire precautions, drills and evacuations are systematically undertaken, recorded 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 any necessary action. Procedures for reporting to the Home Office are secure. Staff clearly understand Home Office requirements regarding enrolment, attendance and reporting arrangements relating to students on student visas. 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 and enhance the students' experience at the college. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 are good and reflect official guidance.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The two proprietors are highly effective in ensuring that high levels of education, welfare and health and safety are maintained. Responsibilities for financial planning and investment in the future are effectively discharged. A clear vision for the college is shared by senior leaders, managers and teachers, who work very well together for

the benefit of the students. Leadership and management are excellent. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and well-documented. Highly effective communication within the college ensures that staff are well informed of any issues or changes. Well-defined policies and procedures are introduced at all levels, and implemented and monitored appropriately. Quality assurance is excellent. Leaders and managers are highly effective in monitoring performance and identifying priorities for improvement. A wide range of data and performance indicators are used effectively to monitor the quality of provision and highlight any relevant improvement actions that may be required. The college successfully attracts and retains well-qualified and experienced teachers and managers. Procedures for the recruitment of staff are satisfactory and in accordance with legal requirements. The provision of information is excellent.

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

#### **3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival**

- 3.1 Initial assessment prior to, and on arrival, is excellent. It is accurate and highly effective in ensuring that students have the required academic ability to successfully complete their course. The process is detailed and ensures that students will be studying an appropriate combination of subjects to meet their chosen progression route into higher education and that any required additional support is very quickly put in place.
- 3.2 Clear and appropriate entry criteria are set and used effectively to provide accurate and appropriate advice and guidance to prospective students. A formal application process includes an interview with one of the two principals, and a detailed review of previous academic achievement provides a foundation for understanding each student's abilities and educational needs. According to their subject choice, students are required to sit subject-related tests to determine their suitability for their chosen courses. Most students will meet subject teachers at the interview stage to assess their suitability for their chosen course or to learn more about a subject new to them. Any special educational needs are effectively identified, with any required learning support arrangements being put in place quickly.
- 3.3 Regular detailed assessment identifies 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.
- 3.4 High quality information, advice and guidance are made available to students through the college's website. The website is detailed and provides accurate information about life at 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**

- 3.5 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. The curriculum is based on a clear policy statement, is well planned and provides a comprehensive range of UK Advanced Level programmes and General Certificate of Secondary Education courses to meet the different needs of students. Programmes of study are clearly focused on preparing students for university. As a result, students are successfully educated in accordance with their objectives and the college's aims.
- 3.6 Courses are very well managed and those that may be offered to students on student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance. Students studying on student visas will be placed on courses at an appropriate level and on an approved full-time programme which includes at least 15 hours a week of classroom-based, weekday daytime study.

- 3.7 A detailed framework is in place by which overall student performance can be clearly evaluated by reference to norms derived from externally accredited national Advanced Level and General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations.
- 3.8 Courses match those listed on the website and in other marketing materials.

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

- 3.9 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are excellent. Teaching is characterised by detailed planning, with teachers having a clear understanding of the needs of their students and taking considerable care to plan tasks to meet their needs. Teachers are well-qualified and have excellent subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. They use highly effective teaching methods to deliver engaging and student-focused lessons and are very enthusiastic, successfully helping students to develop their examination skills. Lessons are delivered at a lively pace. Students work well individually and in small groups, showing excellent co-operative learning and independence.
- 3.10 Classroom resources are of an excellent quality, quantity and range and are used effectively by teachers to support learning. Teachers offer individual help and support to ensure that high levels of knowledge and understanding are developed. Students benefit greatly from small group sizes, with lessons successfully addressing the needs of students through tasks designed to meet their individual learning needs and the final assessment requirements of their course. The very high expectations of teachers ensure that students are consistently challenged and well supported to meet their learning goals. As a result, students make high levels of progress in class in relation to their ability and starting points.
- 3.11 Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. They are extremely productive, with them working collaboratively to enhance learning and progress.
- 3.12 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 does not discriminate against students, including those with the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.13 Assessment is regular and thorough, accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses in students' progress and highlights areas for improvement. Feedback to students is excellent. It is positive, encouraging and accurate and is clearly linked to the syllabi of the relevant exams. It clearly identifies areas for improvement and details how to improve their examination skills. As a result, students effectively develop their confidence and independence.
- 3.14 Arrangements for tracking students' progress are excellent. The progress of each student is carefully tracked and allows students and teachers to effectively monitor their progress. Students meet with their teachers regularly to review their progress and report that they know how they are progressing.

**3.(d) Attainment and progress**

- 3.15 Progress and attainment are excellent. Students receive an excellent standard of education which allows them to develop significant and substantial new knowledge and examination skills. National exam results, evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of work show that the overall standards being reached are excellent and that outcomes are very high in relation to the students' starting points. Students report that they are very happy with their progress.

## **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. Health and safety and security are well managed and monitored with comprehensive oversight which ensures that any issues are quickly addressed. The premises are fit for purpose, well-maintained and of a high quality, effectively supporting learning and ensuring a safe and secure learning environment. Classrooms are clean, with good lighting, heating, sound insulation and ventilation. They are well equipped and furnished to a high standard. As a result, the premises provide a comfortable, safe and secure learning environment.
- 4.2 Health and safety, first aid and fire safety policies and procedures are detailed and effectively implemented. All necessary measures to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards have been taken. 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. Fire precautions, drills and evacuations are systematically undertaken and are clearly understood by all students and staff. Fire action notices are clearly displayed and fire exits are well signposted. Fire protection equipment is properly sited and regularly checked. An appropriate number of fire marshals and staff trained in first aid are in place, with full details available on notice boards throughout the college, including in each classroom. All electrical equipment is PAT tested regularly as required. Toilet facilities are adequate in number and well-maintained. Free drinking water is readily available throughout the college.
- 4.3 Proper provision is made for students who are ill or injured. Due to the age of the building, the college is not accessible by wheelchair users or students with mobility difficulties.

### **4.(b) Student registration and attendance records**

- 4.4 Student registration and attendance records are excellent. A comprehensive admission policy is in place and the required procedures are properly observed. An electronic central register is accurately maintained and individual student files contain all required information.
- 4.5 Daily attendance is accurately recorded and appropriately monitored. The college has very high expectations regarding student attendance and punctuality and staff make excellent use of electronic systems to monitor individual student attendance and promptly follow-up any absences or lateness. Teachers record individual student attendance at the beginning of each class session and attendance staff address any concerns or issues related to attendance very promptly. Overall, student attendance is high and punctuality good.



- 4.6 Procedures for reporting to the Home Office, as well as the enrolment and attendance requirements for students on student visas are secure and fully understood by relevant staff.
- 4.7 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**

- 4.8 Pastoral support for students is excellent and is a key priority for the college. The college's pastoral structure provides excellent support and guidance for its students in accordance with its aims. The well-being of each student is effectively supported through the assignment of a curriculum manager and personal tutor, together with the support of the welfare officer and safeguarding team.
- 4.9 Students receive a comprehensive and effective induction on arrival which includes detailed information about their studies, the college and health and safety and welfare arrangements. They know who to go to if they have a problem and settle into their course, the college and the local area quickly.
- 4.10 Relationships between staff and students are excellent and enhance the students' experience at the college. A strong culture of mutual respect, integration and tolerance is in place. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures reinforce this culture and underpin the expectations of behaviour and conduct. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and meetings with students, show that they feel that the college is providing them with a safe and comfortable environment which is highly effective in meeting their learning needs.
- 4.11 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 an appropriate range of good quality enrichment and social activities which effectively enhance their learning.

#### **4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s**

- 4.12 Safeguarding arrangements for students under the age of 18 are good. The college is highly committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young adults. This commitment is effectively promoted by the two principals and shared by other senior leaders, managers and staff who work closely together to ensure the safety of students. A comprehensive safeguarding policy is in place and is effectively implemented.
- 4.13 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) suitability checks have been completed and recorded for all relevant staff. The college has a Single Central Register which maintains records of all staff, including details of enhanced DBS checks undertaken. Where relevant, staff with a current DBS check appropriately supervise staff waiting for their DBS to be completed. However, formal risk assessments for such instances are not formally completed.

- 4.14 All members of staff undertake Level 1 safeguarding training whilst the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead are trained to Level 3 in Multi Agency Safeguarding and Child Protection, in addition to Prevent training.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) Ownership and oversight**

- 5.1 Governance and oversight are excellent. The two proprietors are highly effective in ensuring that high levels of education, welfare and health and safety are maintained. Responsibilities for financial planning and investment in the future are effectively discharged. A clear vision for the college is shared by senior leaders, managers and teachers, who work very well together for the benefit of the students. A strong commitment to continuous improvement ensures that challenging targets for staff, including student achievement, are set and met.
- 5.2 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 licences.

### **5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities**

- 5.3 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. Leadership and management are excellent. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and well-documented. There is highly effective communication between senior leaders, managers and other staff. Well-defined policies and procedures are introduced at all levels, and implemented and monitored appropriately.
- 5.4 The college is highly successful in securing and retaining well-qualified staff. A comprehensive system of staff reviews ensures that staff are well-qualified for the work they do, and are appropriately supported by the management team. A good programme of staff development ensures that staff are appropriately trained for their roles.

### **5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback**

- 5.5 Quality assurance is excellent. The college senior leadership have strong and detailed oversight of all aspects of the curriculum which allows strategic decisions to be made that benefit students and their progress. A wide range of data and performance indicators are used effectively to monitor the quality of provision and highlight any relevant improvement actions that may be required. Self-assessment and evaluation are well-developed and used effectively to inform improvement planning and ensure that the necessary resources are in place to meet the needs of the college.
- 5.6 Student feedback is regularly and systematically collected. This feedback is effectively analysed, shared with staff, managers, and senior leaders and used regularly to inform academic action planning and the identification of college priorities. Student performance data is available and is effectively reviewed by senior leaders. The college has an effective student voice programme via a student council, who meet with staff regularly to plan events and make suggestions about

improvements to student experience, such as improvements to the common room or events which the whole student body can attend such as the summer ball.

- 5.7 A comprehensive complaints policy is in place, with students confirming that they are aware of it.

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

- 5.8 Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are satisfactory. An appropriate recruitment policy ensures that suitably qualified and experienced staff are recruited. All required recruitment checks have been carried out in a timely manner and the vast majority appropriately recorded. The process to validate applicants' previous work history and qualifications is good, with due regard to statutory requirements concerning the identity of staff. A system to verify references is in place and ensures that the reference has originated from an appropriate source. A detailed central record is maintained. However, precise start dates are not clearly recorded. The retention of copies of DBS documents exceeds current government guidelines.

#### **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 highly responsive in providing information before and during the inspection in a timely manner.