



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

OXFORD INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

Full Name of College **Oxford International College**

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Academic Principal **Mrs Fiona Pocock**

Chief Operating Officer **Mrs Kim Terrar**

Proprietor **Dr Mario Peters**

Age Range **15-21**

Total Number of students **62**

Numbers by Age and type of study 15-18: **36**

19+: **26**

FE only: **62**

Inspection dates 8th – 10th November 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language colleges. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the college's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the UK Border Agency to inspect privately funded further education colleges in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and English language colleges.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Standards for private colleges;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations to colleges 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. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- 1.1 Oxford International College Ltd is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It was established in 2002 by a group of academics from the University of Oxford with the aim of preparing students aged typically from 15 to 21 for entry into British universities, other English-speaking universities and higher education institutions. It offers highly personalised learning programmes with the majority of teaching taking place by one-to-one tuition. The college's primary objective is to help every student achieve his or her personal academic goals. The college director is also a co-proprietor.
- 1.2 The college moved into newly refurbished premises in January 2011. The proprietor both designed and oversaw the refurbishment, creating learning spaces which are geared towards support for one-to-one and small group tuition. The college is situated in the heart of Oxford city centre. It offers an extensive programme of full time GCSE, IGCSE and A level courses. It also offers a university foundation programme and boarding school preparation programme, neither of which were running at the time of the inspection. Students are also offered the opportunity to undertake an enrichment programme which is designed to provide life skills and experiences. Full-time students usually board with local host families in Oxford.
- 1.3 In addition to the relocation, both the senior leadership and senior management teams have been recently extended and undergone re-organisation in preparation for a planned expansion. The core team of 11 permanent staff is supported by 62 self-employed subject specialist tutors.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 62 students (28 female and 34 male) on roll representing 15 nationalities. Asian and British students were in the majority. The college is academically non-selective and has on roll students with a range of abilities. It does not make any additional provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.5 Students are selected by personal interview and on the basis of their academic qualifications and school reports. They receive guidance from senior academics within the college in determining appropriate courses of study. There are currently 23 students who receive support for English as an additional language (EAL), leading to recognised qualifications including IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and IGCSE.
- 1.6 The college co-ordinates homestay arrangements for a number of students who live at a distance or are from abroad.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE

2.(a) Executive Summary

	Section of the standards	Grade awarded 1-4
3.	The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievement	1 Exceeds expectations
4.	Students' welfare, including health and safety	1 Exceeds expectations
5.	The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	1 Exceeds expectations

- 2.1 The college is successful in its aim to help each student attain their personal academic goals by providing an extensive curriculum designed to precisely match the learning needs of individual students delivered largely on a one-to-one basis by highly qualified subject tutors. Teaching is of a very high quality and results in confident and independent learners who progress very well. The students are highly motivated and receive excellent guidance from their tutors. In consequence progress is rapid and most reach high levels of attainment. The majority of students move into their A level courses or on to university as desired.
- 2.2 Situated in a purpose-built space, the college provides a safe and secure environment for staff and students. There is a strong awareness of safety and security and the college fully complies with health and safety regulations and with the requirements for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18. Academic and personal guidance is good and the well-being of students is overseen by a full-time student welfare manager. Student accommodation is of high quality. The college environment is purposeful and harmonious with no evidence of harassment or bullying. Students express high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of their college life.
- 2.3 Leadership and management at all levels in the organisation are powerful and effective. The proprietor sets out a clear vision for the college with both the senior leadership team and senior management team, ensuring clear direction and high expectations. Collective and consensus decision making feature strongly but individual accountabilities are clear. Quality assurance systems tend to be informal but are effective in ensuring that outcomes for students remain positive.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with standards for Private Colleges

- 2.4 At the time of the inspection, the college met all the key standards for private further education colleges and quality is high. The college exceeds expectations overall.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Co-ordinate the recording of assessment information and the tracking of students' progress over time more closely.
 2. Develop a college management of information system to connect and integrate information about students more easily.

3. Provide a balanced careers education programme that not only prepares students for further education but also for their working lives.
4. Support staff development by more closely assessing their in-service needs and facilitating training opportunities.
5. Provide more social and recreational events for students.

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

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

- 3.1 The assessment of students prior to arrival is very thorough. The college is academically non-selective but has in place carefully thought out and accurate advice and procedures which enable students, parents and academic staff to be involved in the assessment of students' suitability for a course of study. Due consideration is given to their previous academic record, reports from school, the aspirations of students and their parents and the appropriateness of courses to future ambitions.
- 3.2 Students are interviewed in person or via the internet by a senior member of the academic staff and, if accepted, they are assessed as part of the induction process by subject tutors to determine the best teaching approaches. They may also attend sample lessons and have the opportunity to switch courses as a result of guidance from tutors.
- 3.3 International students are assessed for their proficiency with English and are provided with appropriate support leading to an IELTS qualification.
- 3.4 The assessment information gathered is used well by the tutors. Administration and record keeping is very good and a curriculum precisely tailored to the needs of the individual allows subject tutors to fully assess and understand the learning needs of each student.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.5 The curriculum and individual courses are well matched to the aims of the college. The college meets its aim to help every student reach their personal academic goals by providing a curriculum and an approach carefully selected to meet an individual's needs, and delivered through one-to-one tutorial sessions.
- 3.6 Sixty-two subjects are available at A level, IGCSE and GCSE, and at the time of the inspection, the college was offering 24 courses at A level and 17 at IGCSE or GCSE together with an enrichment curriculum and support for English language learners. The flexibility provided by having a large pool of self-employed tutors means that subjects can be easily added or removed as required. The college prospectus promises to provide an individually designed curriculum for each student. Courses are therefore very well matched to the students' needs and aspirations, and tuition methods are in line with the learning styles of individual students. The majority of students complete the courses for which they are registered.

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

- 3.7 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is excellent overall. Teaching in over half of the lessons seen was outstanding and in almost all of the rest was good. No teaching was less than satisfactory. As a result, teaching is very effective in promoting students' progress and they demonstrate good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill.
- 3.8 All full-time students spend a minimum of 15 hours in taught sessions and supervised study, and many spend a good deal more. Whilst some practical sessions and elements of the enrichment curriculum are taught in small groups, all academic

tutoring is on a one-to-one basis, allowing tutors to create an environment of high expectation and strong challenge.

- 3.9 Tutors are very well qualified and experienced and, like the students, have made a positive choice to work in a one-to-one tutorial environment. This allows them to better understand students' needs and plan carefully, share their enthusiasm for their subject and foster confidence. Features of outstanding teaching included dialogue designed to foster independence of thought and application of knowledge; questioning that encouraged deep learning, and excellent subject knowledge.
- 3.10 Students with EAL are well supported and where appropriate are prepared for the IELTS examination.
- 3.11 Assessment is good overall, but could be improved further. At present it is largely informal, although tutors are required to complete a brief progress report at the end of each session. The continual assessment through diligently marked work and regular dialogue with tutors is powerful in promoting learning. Regular end of module tests and examinations allow the college to track grade improvement over time. However, the present arrangements lack co-ordination, and as a result, senior academics and tutors do not always see the relative impact of teaching on learning and progress across each student's programme of study.
- 3.12 Targets for learning are reassessed frequently and tutors set both short term targets for improvement between sessions and long term goals for examination success. Conversations with students confirm that they are very clear about what they need to do to progress and most exhibit high levels of confidence that they will reach their desired goals.

3.(d) Progress and attainment

- 3.13 The progress and attainment of the students is excellent. Lesson observations, scrutiny of students' marked work and conversations with students about their work indicate that they make very good progress and reach high levels of attainment. Supervised private study and regular homework, which is carefully and promptly marked, also contribute to strong learning. Analysis of examination results over the past five years indicate that high attainment is consistently maintained. Examination results at A level are significantly above national norms and around nine out of ten students move on to university.
- 3.14 Overall, the progress made by students is excellent. A very small number of students are more tentative learners than the majority and require more support and encouragement. Tutors are skilled at providing this without reducing the challenge, although the pace of learning can fall as a result.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises (in line with expectations of educational institutions)

- 4.1 The health, safety and security arrangements exceed requirements. The college moved to newly re-furnished premises in January 2011 which were specifically designed by the proprietor and his architect to provide a learning environment that is fit for its intended purpose. Health, safety and security were key priorities in that design and as a result the required structures, frameworks and systems are all in place to ensure that students and staff are safe, secure and comfortable.
- 4.2 The college is careful to minimise the risk from fire. Modern fire equipment is in place and checks are up-to-date. An unplanned fire evacuation triggered in another part of the building and carried out during the inspection was well managed and efficient. All records and logs are meticulously maintained.
- 4.3 All areas of the building are subject to regular risk assessment and this is overseen by a health and safety committee. Well-structured policies are in place and all compliance and insurance documentation is up-to-date and accessible.
- 4.4 The college makes excellent arrangements for the health of students. It has three trained first aiders and engages a local GP with whom all students are registered. First aid kits are well maintained and appropriately positioned. There are appropriate facilities for students who are injured or unwell.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.5 The arrangements for registration and attendance are suitably thorough.
- 4.6 Detailed admission registers are maintained and individual student files contain admission details, academic records and other information, for example health issues. All of these records are currently paper based, making it sometimes difficult to co-ordinate and link all areas of information relating to students.
- 4.7 Daily attendance is closely monitored and unexpected absence is followed up on the same day. Copies of student timetables are kept in the main office and the flow of information between administrators and academic tutors quickly identifies students who are late or who fail to show for specific sessions. Such instances are rare. The senior leadership team fully understands and applies the requirements and procedures of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) in relation to attendance.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.8 The pastoral support for students is excellent. The general oversight and co-ordination of the welfare and pastoral support for students is provided by a full time student welfare manager. Students are carefully inducted into the college through a formal programme and are given secure guidance by academic staff to ensure they make appropriate course choices.
- 4.9 Evidence indicates that all staff in this small college feel it is part of their role to support the well-being of students. Relationships between students and between staff and students are strong and positive. They know each other well and students socialise effectively between their taught sessions.

- 4.10 Support for learning through the one-to-one relationship is strong and academic guidance is well managed by personal tutors and the senior staff. Students feel that their personal tutor is the first point of contact for any problem they might have, academic or otherwise.
- 4.11 When questioned students confirmed they felt safe in the college and were not aware of any instances of bullying or harassment. They were aware from the student handbook that the college had suitable policies relating to their care and welfare.
- 4.12 Careers guidance does not prepare students for the world of work. Although the college gives excellent support with choice of and application to university, it does not extend beyond this.
- 4.13 Student responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and informal interviews indicated that while they appreciate the formally organised social activities currently provided by the college, they would like more frequent opportunities to play sport together and engage in other pastimes. Inspection evidence supported their observation.

4.(d) Child protection

- 4.14 Child protection arrangements are robust. Safeguarding arrangements are particularly well managed. All staff, homestay providers and their families, regular visitors and external trainers have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and a single central record is maintained detailing CRB data, identity checks, residential information and proof of qualification. This register was checked and found to be fully up-to-date.
- 4.15 The care and well-being of children under 16 is monitored by the local social services department, who provide regular reports for the college.
- 4.16 A senior member of staff has undertaken the required child protection training and all staff are in the process of receiving awareness training. This meets requirements. Secure policies and procedures are in place and lines of reporting and responsibility are clear and explicit. The arrangements pay proper regard to official guidance. The implementation of strategy is regularly checked by senior staff.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.17 The accommodation is very clean, bright and spacious and provides all the resources and facilities young people require to work and relax. Each student had their own bedroom with work space, internet access and television, full use of a large dining kitchen and their own bathroom along with access to extensive grounds and use of a tennis court.
- 4.18 Host families provide effective pastoral and emotional support in a family setting, and placements are successful because the college takes great care in matching the requirements of the students to the homestay placement. Regular checks are made on the accommodation by the student welfare manager.
- 4.19 Students are happy with the accommodation provided and quickly establish a social life based around their friends and the area where they are living. Homestay makes a significant contribution to the development of English for international students and to their understanding of British culture and traditions.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Leadership at all levels in the organisation is powerful and effective. This is because the proprietor has set out a clear vision for the college that is true to the stated aims, and members of the team subscribe to this. The leadership has a high level of detailed knowledge about the operation of the college and is on the premises at some time during every week. All senior leaders have autonomy to act but the leadership structure encourages collective and consensus decision making. It also aids clear communication. The proprietor chairs key meetings and is fully involved in the creation of development plans, policies and operational frameworks.
- 5.2 The strong focus on health, safety and welfare of the students is driven by the proprietor and this priority is reflected throughout the work of the college.
- 5.3 The college does not undertake formal performance management of subject tutors but informal evaluation is on-going, and in this small college leaders and managers know their staff well. The lack of formal structures has no impact on teaching or learning, both of which exceed expectations.
- 5.4 Clear accountabilities are in place and independent oversight is provided by an external advisory board made up of local academics and businessmen. As a result, the leadership team has a very accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the college obtained through very good self-evaluation. Appropriate improvement targets are set and align with the key focus on meeting the learning needs of individual students.
- 5.5 The college has the appropriate legal permissions from the appropriate bodies including an operational lease, full planning permissions and copyright licences.
- 5.6 The proprietors fulfil their statutory duties in meeting the needs of all students under the age of 18.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.7 The management, organisation and administration of the college are outstanding. Both the senior leadership team and the senior management team work effectively together to ensure that the environment is purposeful and productive and that clear expectations and direction are communicated both to tutors and students. This is underpinned by good record keeping and established systems, policies and procedures. As a result, management is effective in discharging responsibilities for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.8 Managers at all levels have a good insight into the workings of the college, and play a suitable role in its strategic development. Self-evaluation is accurate and provision for students in terms of the material learning environment and positive academic outcomes is very high. Planning for future improvement is well established and appropriate targets for future strategic development are in place. The college is successful in recruiting and retaining suitable staff. At present, staff development is not linked well enough to identified needs, although training for roles in safeguarding, welfare and health and safety are not compromised.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.9 Quality assurance arrangements exceed requirements. The college does not rely on a heavily bureaucratic system for quality assurance and has a clear expectation of high standards to which both tutors and students respond positively. Progress is closely monitored and this is very effective in securing high quality outcomes for students.
- 5.10 The opinion of students is sought through the dialogue with personal and academic tutors, through the student council and through the regular conversations between senior staff and individual students.
- 5.11 Complaints are few and the satisfaction of parents, tutors and students is high. Complaints are properly recorded and a well-structured and detailed complaints procedure is in place which includes the involvement of an external independent adjudication panel if required.
- 5.12 In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, students agreed that the college had helped place them on courses suited to their interests and abilities, and in consequence they felt they were making good progress. The majority thought they were well supported by tutors and also encouraged to work independently. All felt the college was well managed and that students were listened to and their concerns responded to. The inspection evidence supports these views.

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

- 5.13 Staff recruitment arrangements are very effective. The college attracts highly qualified tutors who are subject to an exemplary appointment process. Many tutors have been associated with the college for a number of years.
- 5.14 Personnel records are carefully maintained and regularly updated. All staff are subject to identity checks and enhanced CRB checks and their qualifications and employment history are carefully scrutinised. References are always taken up.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.15 The information provided by the college is extensive and accurate. The college website contains detailed and comprehensive information to prospective parents and their children. It is particularly informative about the curriculum, student welfare and progress. It is fast and easy to navigate and checked and updated regularly.
- 5.16 The college website contains complete and up-to-date information about fees and charges. A policy for the remission of fees provides a clear and fair mechanism for refunds. The bursar maintains an individual finance file for each student that accurately tracks all the relevant financial information.
- 5.17 The information required both before and during the inspection was promptly provided, of a very high quality and well organised.

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, self-employed tutors, administrative staff, a parent and the proprietor. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The responses of staff and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mr Chris W Penter	Lead Inspector
Mr Gareth Chester-Jones	Team Inspector