



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**CAMBRIDGE ARTS AND SCIENCES SIXTH FORM AND TUTORIAL
COLLEGE**

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Cambridge Arts and Sciences Sixth Form and Tutorial College

Full Name of College	Cambridge Arts and Sciences Sixth Form and Tutorial College		
DCSF Number	873/6022		
Address	Cambridge Arts and Sciences Sixth Form and Tutorial College 13-14 Round Church Street Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB5 8AD		
Telephone Number	01223 314431		
Fax Number	01223 467773		
Email Address	enquiries@catscollege.com		
Principal	Dr Glenn Hawkins		
Proprietor	Cambridge Education Group		
Age Range	15 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	278		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (139 boys; 139 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	11-16:	15	
	16-19:	263	
Number of Day Pupils	43		
Number of Boarders	Total:	235	
	Full:	235	Weekly: 0
Inspection date	12th to 13th January 2010		
Final (team) visit	08th to 10th February 2010		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. It consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

A concurrent inspection of boarding was carried out by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The report of this inspection is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- 1.1 Cambridge Arts and Sciences Sixth Form and Tutorial College (CATS) is an international college situated in the heart of the city of Cambridge. It was founded as a small family business in the 1980s but has grown considerably since then, particularly in offering vocational courses; these courses are offered at the Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts (CSVPA) which shares its campus with CATS. Both are owned by Cambridge Education Group and share the same management and facilities team.
- 1.2 This inspection was only concerned with the provision for students up to the age of eighteen. Hence, at CATS, courses in GCSE, A level, as well as a foundation course in art and design at CSVPA were inspected. The college is a pre-university study institution and aims to provide support to ensure that all students receive appropriate levels of guidance on their intended career.
- 1.3 The aim of the college is to encourage all students to realise their potential by fostering independence and maturity, in order to prepare them for their future as global citizens.
- 1.4 Considerable changes have taken place since the last inspection. The college is no longer family-run, but supported by a private equity firm. New buildings and facilities have been established. There has been a clearer division between CATS and CSVPA, a substantial increase in the full-time teaching staff, together with the appointment of full-time residence managers.
- 1.5 The college takes students from the age of fifteen and some are mature students in their mid-twenties. At the time of the inspection there were 449 students on roll, with 278, an equal number of boys and girls, being under the age of nineteen. The great majority come from overseas, with the college having had students from up to 33 different nationalities. Almost all students, 406, have English as a second language and 381 receive some form of support to develop their English. One student has a statement of special educational needs and a further 44 receive some specialist support to help them in their learning. The ability profile of the college is in line with the national average. Almost all students live in a variety of accommodation within walking distance of the college.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The college has good standards in all its areas of provision, with its leadership and management being outstanding. Students in the college achieve well and all, including those who have extra support for learning difficulties or for language, make good progress. This is because they receive good quality teaching as well as extra support from staff outside lessons. Whilst the teaching is good overall, some does not always engage students actively. Students' performance in A level examinations has improved steadily over the last three years. They develop good basic and practical skills, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), but the use of ICT in their teaching is rather limited. Much attention is given to developing their skills in English and their advancement is impressive. Most students have a good attitude to their learning; they work well and enjoy good relationships with staff, but they are not always punctual to lessons. Some excellent learning was seen in the arts and design course offered by the CSVPA where students were fully engaged in interesting and innovative work. The space and facilities for students to study in college are rather limited at present.
- 2.2 Students' personal development is good. They are looked after well and live and learn in a pleasant, caring environment. Their views are sought and swift action is taken to improve arising issues. Keen attention is given to students' welfare and safety. The introduction of lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) has been beneficial, but is still not yet fully developed.
- 2.3 Effective governance and management have ensured that the college has made very good progress since the last inspection and has successfully tackled all the main points of criticism. This is because of significant improvement in the quality of leadership and management and effective strategic planning. Monitoring and evaluation of the college's provision is strong, meaning that that improvement in the last few years has been rapid. Nearly all the parents live abroad and most do not speak English, so there were no responses to the parental questionnaire. Despite the obvious difficulties, the college takes considerable trouble to establish good links with parents.

2.(b) Action points

(a) Compliance with the Independent School Standards Regulations

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended.

(b) Recommended action

- 2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements:
1. continue to improve the quality of teaching by the use of more imaginative teaching styles and resources, including information and communication technology (ICT);
 2. improve the teaching of PSHE so that students see it as more interesting and relevant to their lives;

3. improve the facilities and space available in the personalised learning centre;
4. encourage students to be more punctual to lessons.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Students receive a good quality education, in line with the aims of the college. They display suitable levels of knowledge, understanding and skill, given that many are learning in a language that is not their own. Students have good attitudes to work. When working individually they concentrate well and apply themselves thoughtfully to the task in hand, although some are reluctant to work in pairs or groups when asked to do so.
- 3.2 Students develop their skills of reading and writing well and present their written work in a logical manner. Some good advice on how to organise their work is given and many students take heed, but the folders of some of the weaker students can be disorganised. Their skills of numeracy are well developed and they are able to apply these in their subjects, for example in using the gas laws in a physics lesson.
- 3.3 Some students apply their skills in ICT very well. For example, they used their own art work to produce amusing animations and edited music in producing their films. However, the use of ICT by teachers as an aid to learning was not seen in many lessons.
- 3.4 Opportunities to display substantial independent thought are sometimes limited by the teaching styles, but some students on vocational courses display real creativity and flair when linking art to fashion and in the use of a variety of materials to express their ideas. When given the opportunity to be independent and creative, students rise to the task and are able to speak with enthusiasm about their work.
- 3.5 The personalised learning centre contains a library and facilities for ICT. The number of spaces for study is rather small and the library has a limited selection of books, although students have access to other libraries in the city. It is a multi-purpose space and some students consider that it is not very conducive to quiet work.
- 3.6 Testing on entry indicates that students have average levels of attainment, except in English language where they are obviously below the norm. The A level results have improved over the last three years and are now slightly above the national averages for all maintained schools. This means that their performance in the A level examinations is now high compared with the national average for all maintained schools. The GCSE results are below national averages but these students do well later as they develop their language skills. Since nearly all students are being taught in a second language this represents a good performance.
- 3.7 Data indicates that students make good progress over time. Placement on courses run by the CSVPA is through portfolio assessments, interview and not examinations, but students are very successful in moving on to university places.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.8 The college offers a good curriculum, in line with the college's aims of providing a broad education, with a wide range of courses available for fifteen to eighteen year olds. In addition to their academic courses, all students have PSHE lessons each week, and the three sessions with their personal tutor may also contain some aspects of PSHE. Whilst this is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, some teaching of PSHE failed to engage the students who do not always see the relevance of the work covered.
- 3.9 The personal development of students is considerably enhanced by the support given to all. Those identified as gifted and talented benefit from a range of enrichment activities, Oxbridge preparation sessions and other extension projects. There is full access to the curriculum for those students with learning difficulties and disabilities, those with special educational needs, and those who have English as an additional language.
- 3.10 Since the last inspection, the identification of, and provision for, students with learning difficulties has improved considerably. Extensive, targeted help is offered by the learning support department who also offer guidance to subject teachers and residence managers about students. There are thorough individual learning plans in place which show a good knowledge of students; the targets set are encouraging, and effective strategies for improvement and suggestions for appropriate study methods are made. The resources are imaginative and used well. Students are very satisfied with the provision offered; they are able to describe the positive impact that it has made on their studies.
- 3.11 Students whose first language is not English are well provided for through relevant lessons and work appropriate to their needs. The vast majority of them make good progress in English, as measured in their International English Language Testing scores. They spoke highly of the teaching and support offered to them.
- 3.12 There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including field trips, clubs, sports and competitions. Many links with individual institutions provide opportunities for students to undertake enrichment activities and work experience in the fields of medicine, art, drama, fashion and business. There is a programme of cultural, historic and popular visits arranged throughout the year which, although most incur an extra cost, appeal to a wide variety of interests. All this helps to improve and expand students' personal and cultural experiences.
- 3.13 The college careers department provides much appreciated individual advice, including the selection of appropriate subjects, advice on the choice of, and applications to, university. In addition, students have assistance from their personal tutor and advice from subject and Oxbridge specialists. They are encouraged to attend university fairs and open days, including those organised by the college. The department also provides comprehensive material giving advice for students and personal tutors.
- 3.14 There are a number of links with the local community, including singing in nursing centres and the Round Church. Much work is done by students to support charities such as the local children's hospice and night shelter facilities, as well as national and international charities such as UNICEF and the recent Haiti earthquake appeal.

Fashion shows, carol services and other events are used regularly to support this work.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 Teaching is good, with half of lessons seen being good or better. This enables students to make good progress. Most teaching allows students to develop independence and maturity, in line with the college aims. Teachers are aware of the language difficulties of their students and make considerable efforts to ensure that subject vocabulary is understood.
- 3.16 The best lessons are characterised by the use of interesting material which catches the imagination of students, and a lively pace, with teachers involving students in discussing ideas. Some teachers are particularly adept at targeting significant groups of students, or individuals, so as to develop their language skills. In such lessons, students respond with enthusiasm and interest.
- 3.17 In the less successful lessons progress is slower, teaching material rather narrow or dull, and the engagement of students insufficient. At times, the demands of the examination syllabus means much work is based on past examination questions, or rather restrictive worksheets, requiring few, if any, higher-order learning skills.
- 3.18 Relationships between students and staff are good and most lessons are productive, but in too many cases students are late to lessons, so delaying their start and wasting teaching time. In addition, many subjects experience double hourly-lessons which make concentration difficult towards the end and often necessitate a break between periods.
- 3.19 Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well, and most make objectives clear to the students at the start of lessons. The college has invested heavily in ICT but few imaginative examples of its use were observed. Some rooms are small and, even though group sizes are also small, the size and layout of some rooms affects the quality of teaching and the use of ICT.
- 3.20 There is a comprehensive assessment and reporting policy. Students are tested regularly and the results stored on the college database and compared with targets. Under-performing students receive appropriate guidance and remedial support. The best marking is thorough and provides much guidance to students on how to improve their work. However, the consistency, quality and quantity of marking are too variable.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 Students' personal development is good. The college takes its responsibilities towards the welfare of its students very seriously, understanding that young people living abroad need to be given significant support. A well staffed pastoral system supports personal development, with excellent recording and communication systems, enabling all those with direct responsibility for students' welfare to be quickly and accurately informed of anything they might need to know.
- 4.2 The college has created a feeling of mutual support; the atmosphere in lessons is both positive and friendly. Students are comfortable in their surroundings and this enables them to work hard and make progress. They form close bonds with others from different countries and backgrounds, encouraged by the house system. The concept of multi-cultural internationalism is valued by the students and is a feature of the college.
- 4.3 Students reflect on their personal faith if they wish through the availability of a prayer room, with a quiet and peaceful ambience, and this gives students a welcome retreat from the busy college buildings. The nearby Church of St John's College is used for the college carol service and students of a diversity of faiths are given details of places of worship.
- 4.4 Lessons in PSHE examine personal issues which may be followed up where necessary. Discussion at the student council informs topics that would be of interest for this course; for example, a lesson on body image and manipulation by the media was a direct result of such input. Students' PSHE lessons enhance their moral development by their study of public institutions, such as the monarchy, government and the police.
- 4.5 The cultural development of the students is good. Students understand about other cultures through sharing their own. For example, a student gave a very interesting presentation about New Year and Christmas in Kazakhstan, which was well received by his peers. A wide-ranging programme of excursions is arranged at weekends to places of interest, such as Stratford upon Avon, Bath and Stonehenge, as well as visits to London theatres. The cultural heritage of Cambridge is also widely available to the students on a daily basis and through a programme of planned visits.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.6 The arrangements for welfare, health and safety for students are good. Students receive effective support and guidance from the staff, in the first instance from their personal tutor. A well-established pastoral system, with information logged and disseminated through the evolving school database, allows all staff to have access to relevant information. The system also records students' attendance, which has improved since the last report due significantly to closer monitoring. The punctuality of students is still unsatisfactory, however, and this has a detrimental effect on teaching and learning.
- 4.7 Relationships between staff and students are good, as are the relationships between the students, who are proud of the internationalism of the college. Effective measures are in place to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying, and poor behaviour is effectively dealt with and monitored. A clearly understood

disciplinary system ensures that students are aware of concerns expressed about them, and understand the consequences of further misdemeanour. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is very good.

- 4.8 The small classes and good relationships between staff and students ensure that an atmosphere of trust exists and students almost universally spoke well of the help and accessibility of their personal tutors. Despite the difficulties of expressing themselves in a second language, students manage to establish good links with those who have pastoral responsibility for them, and the staff work very hard to ensure that the students received appropriate care and guidance.
- 4.9 The safety of pupils is given a high priority by the college; the safeguarding policy is robust and implemented successfully, with all staff appropriately trained in child protection procedures. A private company is engaged to undertake fire safety, and termly evacuations are made and recorded. Fire alarms are tested weekly and records kept. Annual risk assessments are made on buildings, and risk assessments are made for all science experiments and trips away from the college.
- 4.10 The college has a large number of staff trained in first aid, and sick students report to the nurse for assessment, with more serious cases of ill health reported to the college doctor. The college has a robust plan for disability access in line with the Special Education Needs and Disability Act.
- 4.11 Students are aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and diet, and the food served is varied, fresh, healthy and plentiful. Some exercise is provided through the sports activities programme. The admission and attendance records are accurately maintained, and students are registered at the start of every lesson, with their attendance closely monitored and evaluated.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.12 A boarding inspection was conducted by Ofsted, but the college has not had a specific ISI boarding inspection; the ISI inspection has considered boarding in the whole-school context.
- 4.13 The nature of the boarding experience contributes well to students' personal development by promoting a degree of independence among them, in line with the school's aims. It makes them self-reliant for their arrangements to get to and from college and gives them responsibility over their own study and the use of their free time. However, there was no evidence of activities provided through the boarding houses.
- 4.14 The college provides a good boarding experience for its students. Since the last report it has invested heavily in its boarding provision, increasing it to 29 properties. All students are housed in single or twin-bedded rooms, with en-suite and study facilities with wireless Internet access available. Each house has a shared communal area and kitchen. The quality of accommodation in the houses visited by the inspectors, Crossways, and Montague Lodge, a recently purpose-built house, was good.
- 4.15 The college has recently appointed seventeen full-time and three part-time supervisors for its boarding accommodation and given them considerable training to allow them to contribute to the boarding experience of the students. All residence managers have access to the college database and so are in communication with the relevant staff in the college.

- 4.16 Relationships in the houses, both between the boarders and between the boarders and resident staff, are good. Full catering is now provided in college. However, no evening meal is available on Saturday and 'brunch' is the only hot meal provided on a Sunday. A packed tea is available at weekends. There is no formal monitoring of students between the end of afternoon lessons and the time students have to be in their rooms in the evening.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The college does not have a governing body but the chief executive of the Cambridge Education Group chairs an executive committee which is responsible for the strategic management of the colleges belonging to the group, including CATS and CSVPA. This committee is serviced by others within the college, led by members of the senior leadership group.
- 5.2 The executive committee is kept well informed through the provision of good quality information and so has a clear oversight and sense of direction for the future. The committee is seen as very supportive and open and has made considerable investments in recent years, for example in the expansion of the accommodation, a movement towards employing more full-time staff, and in the injection of teaching resources, such as those for ICT. Its responsibilities with regard to regulatory requirements are taken seriously. Issues relating to health and safety, the safeguarding of students and other regulatory requirements are well considered and regularly checked for quality.
- 5.3 Progress since the last inspection has been very good with all the significant issues raised in the last report being dealt with effectively. One particularly strong feature in this improvement has been the planning for development which has given a clear sense of purpose to the college and is used very well to check and maintain progress in a range of key areas.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Management and leadership within the college are outstanding and are the main factors contributing to its successful fulfilment of its aims. There have been considerable changes in the senior leadership team since the last inspection. Most members are relatively new in post and yet they have made very significant strides in improving provision. This is because they have well defined lines of responsibility, a clear plan for the issues which need to be tackled, an honesty and willingness to evaluate what is happening and they take quick action in seeking improvements.
- 5.5 The college action plan is sufficient in its scope and yet realistic and relevant to current needs. It is a useful working document which is used regularly to check progress against agreed targets, so ensuring very good development. The current plan identifies: the quality of education; care and relationships; the effectiveness of leadership and management, and the use of ICT across the curriculum as core priorities. These issues are also reflected in departmental action plans and helpfully linked to the training offered to teaching and non-teaching staff.
- 5.6 Supporting the making of decisions is a steady flow of information gained from regular monitoring of the college's provision, for example the quality of teaching, the views of students and examination performance. This cycle of monitoring and evaluation is another key factor in ensuring effective improvements in recent times. In addition, external assessors and inspectors are used in monitoring and much use is made of questionnaires, for example with the views of students on the college's provision. Decisions are swiftly taken when improvements are required.

- 5.7 Steps have been taken to monitor the quality of teaching and this has led to improvement. Heads of department undertake an annual audit, which includes a comprehensive evaluation of the teaching and assessment within their department and recommendations for action follow from this. There is also a regular programme of lesson observation by college staff and inspectors, with a robust system in place to identify unsatisfactory lessons. Remedial help is given to those who need it and there has been considerable training for all staff to improve the quality of teaching.
- 5.8 Issues relating to regulatory requirements are fully understood and well managed, including those on the checking of the suitability of staff and the welfare, health and safety of students, in which areas all staff have been trained for their roles and responsibilities. Managers ensure that students' welfare and personal development is good.
- 5.9 Action has been taken to improve the number and quality of full-time staff, for example by offering incentives and through creating an atmosphere where their welfare and professional development is valued. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are appraised on a regular basis through a good system which is linked to providing information on the professional development needs of all staff.
- 5.10 Newly trained staff and those new to the college receive very good support through a planned programme of induction, which includes both training and a degree of mentoring. The quality of teaching is formally and informally monitored, with the evidence being used to support staff and foster their professional development.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.11 Links between parents and the college are difficult to maintain because the vast majority of parents, carers and guardians are based overseas, and many of these have a limited grasp of English. The parental survey prior to the inspection produced a zero response, indicating the scale of the problems faced by the college.
- 5.12 The college makes strenuous efforts to keep parents well informed about their children's progress. Each half term they receive reports, translated into several languages, which contain comments, grades and targets. Reports vary somewhat in quality. Regular communication is carried out by e-mail, but a great deal of information is by necessity undertaken through educational agents in a number of different countries.
- 5.13 The college has a number of offices based in major capitals overseas that can help to deal with any immediate problems. Senior staff travel regularly overseas where they make themselves available to meet existing parents, as well as recruiting new students. Market development officers also spend much time abroad on college business. Parents are supplied with the information they need, mainly through the college's website.
- 5.14 The college is deeply aware that it has to work very hard to keep parents involved in the education of its students. The detail contained in their database enables accurate information to be easily available for parents and, where there are concerns raised, these are dealt with promptly and efficiently.

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 chair of the executive committee and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick students. The inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of two Ofsted inspectors over four days.

Inspectors

Dr Joe Tierney
Mr Nigel Carr
Mr Oliver Price
Mrs Sue Lucas

Reporting Inspector
Senior Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC)
Senior Team Inspector (Head, ISA)
Senior Team Inspector (Teacher, SHMIS/ISA)