



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**CATS CANTERBURY**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## CATS Canterbury

Full Name of College	<b>CATS Canterbury</b>		
DfE Number	<b>886/6075</b>		
Address	<b>CATS Canterbury Stafford House 68 New Dover Road Canterbury Kent CT1 3LQ</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01227 866540</b>		
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Email Address	jullmer@catscanterbury.com		
Principal	<b>Mr Jonathan Ullmer</b>		
Proprietor	<b>Cambridge Education Group</b>		
Age Range	<b>15+</b>		
Total Number of Students	<b>281</b>		
Gender of Students	<b>Mixed (129 male; 152 female)</b>		
Numbers by Age	11-16:	<b>15</b>	16+: <b>266</b>
Number of Day Students	Total:	<b>35</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>0</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>246</b>	
	Full:	<b>246</b>	Weekly: <b>0</b>
Inspection dates	<b>15 Mar 2011 to 16 Mar 2011</b> <b>19 Apr 2011 to 21 Apr 2011</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection was conducted to assess the suitability of CATS, Canterbury for membership of ISA. It follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the college'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 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of students
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of students, 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.

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the college in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to students' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in December 2008 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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 children. 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 The CATS College in Canterbury was founded in London in 1952 and originally called Stafford House Tutorial College. In 1974 the college relocated in central Canterbury and in 2007 it changed its name to CATS Canterbury, to align itself with its sister college, CATS Cambridge. It is owned by the Cambridge Education Group (CEG) under the proprietorship of Palamon, a private equity company. There is no governing body. Instead, the chief executive of CEG chairs an executive committee to provide strategic direction for all colleges within the group.
- 1.2 Almost all students are boarders from overseas, drawn from 35 countries, and having English as an additional language (EAL). Students are aged from fifteen upwards, with some in their twenties. Students are grouped by academic needs rather than by age. The college aims to encourage all students to realise their potential, by fostering independence and maturity, in order to prepare them for their future as global citizens.
- 1.3 The college features very small class sizes and guarantees that all students who successfully complete its University Foundation Programme (UFP) will gain a place at a UK university. Students of compulsory school age are taught a range of subjects appropriate to their age in a course that prepares them for the UFP, International Baccalaureate (IB), introduced in 2009, or A levels. International GCSE (IGCSE) examinations are available in English and mathematics. Students are taught in mixed aged groups according to the courses they are following. Tests on entry indicate that the ability profile of students is slightly below the national average, although a wide spread of abilities is represented.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, undertaken by Ofsted, there has been a restructuring of senior staff, which includes the appointment of a new principal, vice-principal, pastoral manager, director of studies and operations manager. New building work has also taken place, including a resource centre and library, and science laboratories. Some classrooms have been refurbished. A new coffee bar and dining room opened in November 2010.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection there were 281 students in the college (129 male and 152 female), of whom 246 were boarders. No student had a statement of special educational needs, but four had been identified as having a learning difficulty and/or disability, and all 279 students with EAL receive additional support.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of students' overall achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills is good. Students from many different countries make good progress at the college and, when they leave, most take up places at universities. They are keen to learn and make best use of the opportunities on offer. Each student has an individual education plan, and staff work effectively as a team to support students, in order that all realise their potential, in line with the college's aims. They are competent users of information and communication technology (ICT) and are helped to develop good skills in English, which, for most students, is an additional language. They relate well to both other students and their teachers, and their work reflects pride and organisation. A good curriculum ensures that the students' very different needs are met, and overall, good teaching ensures that good progress is maintained. The strong features of the majority of lessons are not reflected in all.
- 2.2 The personal development of the students is good. They enjoy both the boarding experience and the opportunities provided to lead activities, such as those associated with the popular cultural evenings. Their backgrounds make them well placed to share ideas and information about other cultures, and they are sensitive to the beliefs and practices of others. They respond quickly to crises abroad, for example raising money for tsunami victims in Japan, and also to local needs, such as those of homeless people in Canterbury. In their assemblies, they warmly celebrate the successes of others, for example the acting skills of the theatre studies students, or those who have achieved full attendance. In their pre-inspection questionnaires, students reported that their teachers help them learn, have respect for them as individuals and treat all equally. Some criticised the range of extra-curricular activities on offer, but the inspection team judged that a good number of varied activities exist.
- 2.3 Outstanding leadership and effective governance and management have enabled the college to make rapid progress since its previous inspection. They have successfully dealt with all the recommendations made in the previous report and ensured that the college meets all the regulatory requirements. Effective strategic planning and the introduction of systems for monitoring performance have enabled the college to develop its provision. However, monitoring of the implementation of key policies has not always been sufficiently rigorous in the past. At the heart of the college's success is an excellent system of communicating internally with staff, who feel very much to be part of a team, and with both students and their parents. The college deals very promptly with any concerns that arise. Since the previous inspection, new senior leaders have taken up their posts and significant development of facilities has taken place. The college has also introduced the IB course.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the college met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Introduce a more rigorous system for monitoring key policies at governance and management level.
  2. Provide more opportunities to share best practice in teaching, in order to develop higher levels of active learning and independent thinking amongst students.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the students' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills**

- 3.1 The quality of the students' overall achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is good. Students are well educated, providing them with the opportunity to achieve their potential, in accordance with the college's aims. Students achieve well in oral and written communication, and express independent thoughts clearly. They can apply mathematical skills well in subjects such as economics, and use both books and ICT appropriately to assist their research. Literacy skills develop well during their time at the college, and students are willing to present their ideas in class and to challenge the views of others. They listen attentively in lessons and present their work with care, demonstrating good writing skills. Most folders reflect a sense of pride and organisation.
- 3.2 The following analysis uses the national data for 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in the past three years have fluctuated, according to the ability of individual cohorts and their competence in English at entry. Results in IGCSE examinations have been lower than worldwide and UK norms. However, the grades in EAL and mathematics show improvement from 2009 to 2010 when compared with worldwide averages, those in EAL being higher than worldwide norms in 2010. A-level performance has been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to that for maintained selective schools. In 2008, results were far above the national average for maintained schools and above the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2009, results were similar to the national average for maintained schools. In 2010, 96 per cent of A-level grades were between A\* and B. The college introduced the IB in 2009 and results in 2009 to 2010 were below the average for schools worldwide and in the UK. The progress made by the students at all ages is good, when judged on the range of evidence seen during the inspection. Results in sixth-form courses are generally good in relation to the students' abilities. The good progress made is a significant outcome in view of the fact that in most cases, students are not being examined in their native languages, and begin with a below average ability profile, and significant English language needs. Gifted and talented students progress well, in part as a result of the curricular provision made for them.
- 3.3 Students take part successfully in Young Enterprise competitions, participate in a variety of sporting activities, sometimes against local teams, lead events in the college and join in local community activities. The Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) element of the IB course has been made available to all students, who enjoy its activities. They have taken part in a variety of charitable events, including a Santa Run and a beach cleaning operation. Gifted and talented students follow a leadership course which attracts additional points for higher education application. On leaving the college, most students progress to appropriate courses at universities.
- 3.4 Students are keen to learn and apply themselves well in lessons. They perform the tasks set diligently, working well independently, in pairs or in groups. They make best use of opportunities in lessons to develop their understanding, responding well to challenges and to the enthusiasm of a teacher, but often wait for very specific direction before embarking upon a task. However, a significant minority of students

arrive late to lessons, which can result in a slow start for the class as key points are repeated for the benefit of latecomers.

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

- 3.5 The college offers a good curriculum to support its aims. The curriculum is broad and flexible, responding to the needs of students as identified in an initial screening programme and to the choice of courses made before arrival. The college works with students to ensure that all courses followed are appropriate, and provides intensive courses in English if necessary. Those with a particular talent in a subject receive additional challenge, such as a more difficult topic to investigate, as when a talented student was asked to explain the placebo effect in psychology, and the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met. Very regular meetings with tutors ensure that any difficulties with the curriculum are addressed quickly, with the provision of additional support where necessary. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network programme is used to challenge the most able.
- 3.6 All those who are under 16, and some who are older but new to the country, follow the college's "Pre-course", which meets the requirements for students of compulsory school age. This offers students IGCSE entries in English and mathematics, and provides a grounding in a range of subjects in preparation for the other courses on offer, such as the UFP, recognised by many universities, the IB or A levels. Each year, the curriculum is reviewed in response to the needs and preferences of students, and it provides a wide range of choices, preparing students well for university entrance. The many subjects taught include sixteen different modern foreign languages. Some art work of a high standard was on display during the inspection, but creative subjects are still being developed in the curriculum and are studied by only a small minority of students over the age of 16.
- 3.7 In their questionnaires some students were critical of the extra-curricular activities provided, however the inspectors judged that there is a good range on offer, catering for most interests, including golf, chess, watching films or cooking. Those joining The Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme experience a range of additional activities, including physical and creative challenges. The college carefully monitors participation in activities and encourages all to join in. In addition, the college runs trips of cultural interest to develop students' understanding of British life, such as visits to Oxford, London and Leeds Castle. There are also subject-specific excursions, such as geography field trips and visits to the Bank of England or art galleries.
- 3.8 The college makes good use of local facilities to provide physical activities and many IB students take part in sport as part of their CAS programme. Some also involve themselves in the local community by helping charities, singing in a choir or attending places of worship.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.9 The quality of teaching is good overall and is effective in promoting the students' progress, in accordance with the college's aims. Lessons are carefully planned, paying particular attention to the needs of individual students. Since the previous inspection, the college has maintained a clear focus on developing teaching to accelerate the learning of students. Learning objectives are now fully embedded into lessons, and teaching has good regard to the needs of learners from different cultures.
- 3.10 In most lessons observed, a variety of approaches catered well for different learning styles, for example showing a good balance of individual, paired and group work. These lessons had good pace, encouraging students to remain focused. Students were invited to give presentations, to challenge the views of others and to reflect independently on the topics under discussion. Taking risks produced dynamic student involvement, as when students were invited to evaluate the lesson in English or when the entire class played a game in business to test knowledge and progress. Technology is used well by teachers in lessons and some make electronic resources available to their students. In a small number of lessons, an over-reliance on worksheets that students were asked to complete on their own, a slow pace or too few opportunities to be creative limited independent learning.
- 3.11 Teachers have good subject knowledge and create a very friendly and supportive environment. They are vigilant at checking their students' understanding. Positive feedback is used well to motivate and encourage and, in their questionnaires, the vast majority of students said they felt their teachers help them to learn, show concern for them personally and give them individual help when they need it.
- 3.12 There is a clear policy for assessment and reporting, but practice is inconsistent. Students are tested regularly and assessment results recorded to track progress. The marking of students' work is regular, but clear and detailed advice about how to improve is not always given. Feedback in lessons often provides clear advice for students, but unless the students note this down, there will be no record of this. In some subjects, such as business studies, evaluation sheets are completed by both teachers and students, and at their best these focus attention on key areas for improvement. Half-termly reports provide more detailed advice and action is taken in cases of under-performance. Those students interviewed were aware of their current standard and targets.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good overall, and in some respects, excellent. Religious awareness and understanding are developed through regular newsletters from the principal, and assemblies in which key religious events are celebrated and the views of others explored. Spiritual development is fostered by encouragement to reflect on values in life and a prayer room exists for this purpose.
- 4.2 The students' moral development is supported by a clear code of conduct and they understand the difference between right and wrong. They see the need for rules and accept that there are consequences for breaking them. Moral development is also supported by college systems that reward good behaviour, such as certificates for good punctuality and contribution to the community, and respond quickly to any concerns and complaints. An atmosphere of tolerance and fairness characterises the life of the college. Moral development is further enhanced by discussions in lessons, such as in one on international relations, in which students considered terrorism, reflecting on its impact on global harmony, personal freedom and morality. Students show respect for the views of those from different faiths.
- 4.3 Students have good social awareness and involve themselves in local and national causes. Social development is enhanced by opportunities to sell fair trade products at lunchtime, undertake the cleaning of beaches in Whitstable and help out in charity shops on Saturdays. It also benefits from discussions in lessons, such as those in personal, social and health education, and in biology, in which students discussed recycling, a topic they felt was important. Students are aware of social issues both locally and abroad, responding quickly to raise money to support victims of natural disasters, and are pro-active in organising fund-raising events.
- 4.4 The cultural development of students is a strength of the college. It is fostered by the opportunity to lead cultural events which enable all to gain a greater insight into the customs and practices of others. Students enjoy the opportunity to share their culture with others and some even involve families in sending over special foods from home to serve to friends at the college. Students' awareness of British customs, festivals and beliefs is strengthened by regular newsletters and email communications from the principal, explaining such events as Guy Fawkes Night, the Royal Wedding and elections.

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

- 4.5 Many aspects of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent and overall, they make a good contribution to students' personal development. The college provides effective support and guidance to enable students to realise their potential, and to develop independence and maturity, in accordance with its aims. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and contribute to students' happiness and success. Relationships amongst students are also very good, with respect shown for others both in class and in the boarding areas. Effective arrangements exist for dealing with bullying, though students interviewed reported that this was not a problem. Students' concerns are taken seriously by the college and students value the fact that a response to any issue raised is guaranteed within 24 hours.
- 4.6 All students benefit from a personalised learning programme designed to identify and support individual needs. A team of staff, including a personal tutor, provides both academic mentoring and pastoral care, helping students to select appropriate courses and then to succeed in them. The university entry system is considered from the outset and students are carefully helped through the application process. Small class sizes mean that students can easily ask for help if required. In meetings with inspectors and in questionnaires, students reported excellent relationships with their personal tutor.
- 4.7 Members of staff are trained appropriately in child protection, and safe recruitment guidance is followed scrupulously. A good number of staff have received training in first aid and students who are sick are provided for well, in the first instance by the college nurse and, if necessary, by a doctor. The college has good plans to improve access for those with disabilities or statements of special educational needs, and has due regard to risks from fire and other hazards.
- 4.8 Students are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle and diet, and the food served is nutritious and varied. Some students in their questionnaires were critical of the food, but inspectors judged that it is of a high standard and the fact that students are able to make suggestions, either directly or through the school council, means that they are able to influence the menus to accommodate their own choices. Students are encouraged to exercise and those interviewed were positive about the range of physical activities provided.
- 4.9 The admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained and stored. The electronic registration of students at the start of every lesson provides the college with detailed information about attendance in individual lessons, which is closely monitored. All matters raised at the last inspection have been dealt with effectively.

#### **4.(c) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.10 The quality of boarding education is excellent and makes a significant contribution to the students' education and personal development, helping them to foster independence and maturity, in accordance with the college's aims.
- 4.11 The college has tackled all of the matters raised in the previous inspection report. All of the boarding houses have been refurbished and redecorated; all are well maintained, with good study and leisure facilities. The 24-hour on-call system provides excellent support for students in case of accident, distress or emergency. Any issues are recorded electronically, enabling all members of the academic and

welfare teams to have a holistic picture of each student. Arrangements exist for enabling students whose English is still limited to talk to a native speaker if required. Most students have their own en suite facilities and rooms are spacious, safe and well appointed. Internet access is available, enabling students to keep in touch with their families abroad.

- 4.12 Some students in their questionnaires expressed disappointment with the extra-curricular activities for boarders, however the inspectors judged that there is a good range on offer. Each boarding house has its own activities, ranging from watching films, to cookery or learning chess, and students from other boarding houses are made very welcome.
- 4.13 Excellent relationships exist in the boarding houses, and in their questionnaires the majority of students said that they enjoy boarding. Students are supported by a team of staff and are invited to comment on any aspect of their boarding experience. A representative from each boarding house is on the school council and can therefore influence procedures. Those who monitor and help to deliver the extra-curricular activities, those who live in the boarding houses and those who oversee the boarding provision share a pride and enthusiasm for their work and are committed to providing the very best service possible.

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

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The governance of the college is good overall and in many respects excellent. The college does not have a governing body, but the chief executive of the CEG chairs an executive committee that is responsible for the strategic management of all the colleges in the group. He regularly visits the college to gain first-hand knowledge of current matters and make himself available to both students and staff. Other committees within the college, led by members of the senior leadership group, provide information for the executive committee. The principal of CATS is the director of education for all the colleges and thus expertise is shared to help all progress.
- 5.2 Business Unit Meetings review performance and receive reports from all key areas of the college, enabling strategic planning to be based on reliable and current data. The executive committee has a good range of expertise, including links with business, marketing, educational and international experience, and ICT knowledge. It has been responsible for a rapid expansion in recent years and for significant investment in facilities. It acted promptly and effectively to deal with the various issues raised in previous inspection reports and takes its responsibilities for ensuring compliance with regulations seriously, ensuring that child protection and welfare, health and safety matters are dealt with appropriately. The college meets all statutory requirements.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.3 Outstanding leadership and effective management have enabled the college to make rapid progress since its previous inspection. These are based on a clear vision about the future of the college. Excellent systems for monitoring performance have been introduced, which include regular consultations with students and written reports on assessments shared with both students and their parents.
- 5.4 A detailed development plan encourages regular evaluation of all key areas, including the quality of education, care and relationships, and leadership and management. Where considered necessary, the college employs outside agents to evaluate, advise and train, to support its own monitoring procedures. Perceived weaknesses are dealt with promptly and effectively. Colleagues are invited to contribute to development planning, creating a sense of shared ownership of initiatives. Systems for closely scrutinising policies to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, or to ensure that they are implemented as intended, have not always been sufficiently rigorous in the past. Current documentation and practices are now appropriate.
- 5.5 The college is successful at recruiting well-qualified staff, whose suitability is carefully checked and who, on appointment, are trained in matters relating to safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. Appraisal and performance management systems are in place and opportunities provided for all members of staff to develop professionally. A climate of self-evaluation exists, and at all levels, those with management responsibilities monitor outcomes. Action is taken to support teachers and to ensure that all have the skills required to perform effectively. The sharing of best practice to enable all lessons to be as effective as the best has yet to be developed further. Excellent systems for gathering data exist and

information is used effectively to support and challenge all members of the college community.

- 5.6 Members of staff are positive and enthusiastic about the college. They work well as a team and are proud of the recent improvements that they have helped to produce.

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

- 5.7 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is good. It is difficult for the college to maintain close links with parents, as most do not speak English and live abroad. No parents completed the questionnaire prior to the inspection, although they had the opportunity to do so. However, to ensure the best possible communication, agents acting on behalf of parents regularly visit the college and convey information to them. Agents are trained by the college to ensure a full understanding of relevant procedures and practices. All correspondence from both parents and agents is recorded on the college's information system and matters arising are dealt with promptly and effectively. In addition, CATS has overseas offices in seven countries which translate documents and deal directly with parents. Over the past year, senior academic staff visited fourteen countries to meet parents.
- 5.8 Parents are provided with all required information about the college and their children's progress. For example, they are immediately contacted by email if their children have a medical or boarding concern, or if attendance falls below 90 per cent. They are also quickly informed if there are matters to celebrate, such as excellent attendance or good academic progress. The website contains a great deal of information about the college, and pre-arrival material is translated into all the major languages of its students. Parents' evenings are held overseas and parents are encouraged to attend. Half-termly reports are provided and parents can also access their children's individual education plan. Newsletters are sent regularly, keeping parents informed about the daily life of the college. A complaints policy is available on the website and a client care co-ordinator ensures that any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- 5.9 The college works very hard to achieve and maintain good contact with parents and if any parent can visit during term time, meetings with teachers are arranged. Parents are also shown around the boarding facilities and given opportunities to meet those who care for their children.

**What the college should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of their work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chief executive, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured students. The responses of students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Patricia Taylor

Mr David Johnson

Mr Andrew Gillespie

Reporting Inspector

Former Head, HMC/COBIS overseas school

Director of Studies, ISA/SHMIS school