



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
ABBAY COLLEGE MANCHESTER**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Abbey College

Full Name of College	Abbey College		
DfE Number	352/6044		
Address	5 - 7 Cheapside Manchester M2 4WG		
Telephone Number	0161 8172700		
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Email Address	admin@abbeymanchester.co.uk		
Principal	Ms Liz Elam		
Proprietors	The Alpha Plus Group Ltd		
Age Range	15 to 19+		
Total Number of Students	226		
Gender of Students	Mixed (142 boys; 84 girls)		
Number of Day Students	Total:	153	
Number of Students living in accommodation found by the College	Total:	77	
	Student Residence:	53	Lodgings: 24
Inspection Dates	10 to 13 February 2015		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2011.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors 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 school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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 representatives of the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarders' accommodation, including a small sample of lodgings with host families and the student residence, and the facilities for sick or injured students. The responses of parents and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

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Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Deputy Principal, ISA college)

Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS and ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Abbey College Manchester is a co-educational, independent college, mostly providing one- or two-year courses leading to GCSE, A level, BTEC or the International Foundation Programme (IFP).
- 1.2 The college aims to guide students to achieve academic success, to fulfil their aspirations and to learn to respect and value one another. It sets out to be a friendly, safe and supportive environment, in which students are happy and grow in confidence. It seeks to have a sensitive understanding of the challenges facing young people so as to empower students to make informed decisions about their future, to have the determination to achieve their goals and to make a positive contribution to the community. The college is one of several schools and colleges owned and run by the Alpha Plus Group Ltd. The directors of the Group provide day-to-day governance for the college through their executive management team, although the full board of directors holds overall responsibility for governance.
- 1.3 Established in 1990, the college moved in 2003 to its present location, occupying six floors of a modern office-style building in the heart of Manchester city centre. Since the previous inspection, the college has acquired additional space for an improved entrance to its building and has registered itself to accept boarders of school age. Although it does not provide accommodation, the college arranges lodgings with local families for students who are under the age of 16 on admission. Accommodation for older students living away from home is arranged by Alpha Plus Education Limited (APEL), part of the Alpha Plus Group, either lodging with a host family or sharing a self-catering flat in an accommodation block, supervised by resident staff and managed by APEL. Students over the age of 19 make their own accommodation arrangements, which must be approved by the college.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 226 students, the great majority of them from the age of 15 to 19, with a few who were over 19. There were 190 students in Years 12 or 13. Of the 129 who came from overseas, 14 lived in lodgings arranged by the college; accommodation for a further 63 was arranged through APEL. Most day students live in the Greater Manchester area and come from families with a business or professional background. Those from abroad come from many different countries, among which China, Libya and Nigeria are well represented. Students joining the college are seeking courses that can be tailored to match their varied individual needs and circumstances.
- 1.5 Standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of students entering Year 11 is slightly above the national average, with a wide spread of abilities within each year group, and variation in the spread and average ability from one year to the next. Those students in Years 12 and 13 whose ability has been measured have an ability profile broadly in line with the average for pupils in sixth-form education, with a wide range of abilities, including some very able students, but some who are below the level expected for students in sixth-form education. No student currently has a statement of special educational needs or Education, Health and Care plan. The college has identified 18 students as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND), of whom 17 receive specialist learning support, mostly for dyslexia. English is an additional language (EAL) for 86 pupils, all of whom receive specialist help.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the college.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Abbey College is highly successful in achieving its aims to guide students to achieve academic success, to fulfil their aspirations and to learn to respect and value one another. Students from a very diverse range of educational and cultural backgrounds acquire good results in GCSE, A-level and BTEC examinations and in the IFP. Students who come to the college with limited English language skills or with SEND are well supported in small classes and enabled to acquire the language and other skills that they need in order to progress well. Mostly good, well-planned and well-resourced teaching and an excellent and highly flexible curriculum enable a high proportion of students to achieve their goal of a place in higher education. The students have excellent attitudes to their work, being diligent and attentive in class and taking pride with their written work. The most able achieve places on highly competitive courses, such as medicine.
- 2.2 The students' personal development is excellent. They are confident, articulate and sensitive to the needs of others. In their communal life, they practise the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance and respect for individual liberty and the rule of law. Some would like more opportunity to take responsibility for aspects of student life, and inspectors judged that this would be appropriate. Students benefit from the excellent pastoral care provided by staff who know them well and have excellent relationships with them, based on mutual respect. The arrangements made for welfare, health and safety, whilst mostly of good quality, have deficiencies in important aspects of regulatory compliance and so are sound overall. Health and safety is meticulously managed on the college site. Procedures for handling concerns about safeguarding are secure but not all staff recruitment checks have been completed on time. The college has taken action to ensure that all the checks are completed on new appointees before they start work. Records of the fire evacuation practices conducted in the student accommodation block show that practices have been conducted during the daytime when most students will be at college rather than present in the accommodation.
- 2.3 Governance is sound. The college benefits from good leadership and management, which are effective in setting standards and educational direction, although the distribution of responsibility to senior and middle managers is still developing. Good progress has been made in response to the recommendations of the previous report concerning marking, and constructive comment and target-setting are evident in most subjects.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The college does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding Schools; therefore it is required to:

- ensure that student accommodation arranged by APEL in Cavendish Place complies fully with fire safety regulations to a standard comparable to the main college buildings [NMS 7.2, under 'Fire precautions and drills', and NMS 20.3, under 'Lodgings (long-stay)'];
- ensure that checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regarding the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff are completed before the person starts work and promptly recorded in the single central register of appointments [Part 4, paragraphs 18(2)(d) and 18(3), under 'Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors' and NMS 14.1, under 'Staff recruitment and checks on other adults'; and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b) under 'Welfare, health and safety of pupils' and NMS 11, under 'Child protection'];
- ensure that governors have access to information and data to enable them to oversee and meet the Independent Schools Standards Regulations [Part 8, 34(1)(b) under Quality of Leadership in and management of schools].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the college is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Develop a wider range of teaching strategies so as to stimulate more curiosity and intellectual challenge from learners.
2. Provide more opportunity for students to play a role in organising student life and expressing student opinion.
3. Use the senior leadership team to distribute management responsibilities more widely.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The students' achievements and learning are good.
- 3.2 Students at the college are well educated in a manner that is in accordance with the college's aims. Coming to the college with widely diverse educational backgrounds and needs, sometimes not having succeeded elsewhere, students are enabled to rebuild the foundations of their knowledge and skills, as well as the self-confidence needed, in order to progress well. They are judged to secure suitable levels of knowledge and understanding in English language skills, in mathematics, in reasoning and in their use of information and communication technology (ICT), as is apparent in their books and files and in lessons. Students, who entered the college with limited English language, or with SEND, leave having benefited from the close individual attention that they receive to enable their progress and having successfully completed a GCSE, A-level, BTEC or IFP course. Able students benefit from the small teaching groups which enable them to progress at a suitably fast pace. A high proportion of students leave the college having secured a place at a university of their choice, some of the most able to take up places on highly competitive courses. In addition, students enjoy participating in a range of extra-curricular extension activities, sometimes with marked success; for example, in a Cambridge University poetry competition, taking part in a Model United Nations exercise or in their charity fundraising activities, which have included some students participating in the Great Manchester Run.
- 3.3 Students entering the college from overseas make rapid progress in acquiring English language skills, as is evident in the progress that they make with standardised English language tests. In lessons and in their books and files, students in Years 11, 12 and 13 demonstrate good and improving levels of literacy and numeracy. Most read and converse confidently in English. The following analysis uses national data for the years 2011 to 2013, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been similar to the national average for maintained schools. A-level results have also been similar to the national average for maintained schools overall, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Results at both GCSE and A level in 2014 were an improvement on those in previous years, with 84 per cent of the grades awarded at GCSE being in the A* to C range, whilst at A level nearly two fifths of the grades achieved were A* or A. All the students taking the IFP in 2014 completed the programme successfully, whilst the students following BTEC courses all gained qualifications enabling them to progress to the next stage of their education, with one student gaining the maximum possible score. Taking account of the wide range of educational backgrounds of the students, together with the results of statistical analysis of progress made, the students are judged to make progress that is good relative to the average for pupils of their abilities and needs. Similarly, in Years 12 and 13, the work seen in lessons and the students' files, together with the nationally standardised progress data available, indicates that students also make good progress at this stage.
- 3.4 The students have excellent attitudes towards their work. They are well focused in class, eager to succeed and hard-working. They are receptive rather than challenging learners and many have limited learning skills. They are, however, proficient users of ICT and are able to use the internet effectively for research when

prompted to do so. They participate enthusiastically in the varied activities available to them through the developing programme of extension activities.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.5 The contribution of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.6 The varied and well-constructed curriculum fully supports the aim of the college to help and guide students to achieve academic success. Class sizes are small and flexibility, both in the subjects offered and in the courses available, enables programmes of study to be matched to a large degree to the individual ability and needs of students. The college offers up to 12 different GCSE courses, providing sufficient breadth for students of school age, 16 A-level courses, BTEC level 3 in business and science and in the IFP. Students can choose to take these courses over one or two years, depending on their particular circumstances. They can move between the different pathways; for example, by embarking on an A-level programme and then transferring on to the IFP. This broad and flexible curriculum allows the college to work directly with each student to help him or her to reach the next stage of education. The college is also willing to accept students who are not in the conventional age group for a particular course of study, if that is in their best interests. Students receive excellent guidance regarding university admission processes and are carefully advised about appropriate courses and university destinations. Their curriculum experience is extended through tutor periods, assemblies and the weekly enrichment programme, which together enable a range of topical issues to be discussed and personal, social and health education (PSHE) questions to be covered.
- 3.7 The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all ages and abilities, and ensures that the needs of all students are met. The pre-sessional English courses are designed to help EAL students to access the more traditional courses, and the college provides extra 'booster' sessions for students who arrive late or at mid-term. The college recognises the need to develop the English of international students through all lessons and has a whole-college literacy strategy supported by specialist support from the EAL department. The college has audited how each department is contributing towards the promotion of fundamental British values, in order that overseas students may better understand the culture and history of the country in which they are studying. Students with SEND have access to the full curriculum and their needs are fully recognised and supported by specialist teachers. The SEND department works closely with faculties to identify those students who need support as well as providing in-service training to all staff. Suitable extension work is provided to the most able students in some subjects and in all subjects these students benefit from working in small groups with their teachers.
- 3.8 The varied extra-curricular provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of the students and contributes significantly to their personal development. Given the location and nature of the college buildings, the range of activities that the college offers is excellent. Students can choose, amongst others, various craft activities, international film club, or music club as well as the more traditional sporting activities. At the time of the inspection, two teams of A-level physics students were participating in an engineering scheme, working with engineers on real-life projects. The scheme culminates in a three-day university visit for the projects to be assessed. The college has forged excellent links with the local community to enable students to take advantage of the many opportunities available in the area, such as voluntary work with local charities and work experience in local businesses.

Subject-based activities benefit from the amenities of Manchester such as the theatres, art galleries and university lecture programmes. During the October half term students from the art and photography department spent three days in Rome.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 The overall quality of teaching is good.
- 3.10 Teachers know the students well and plan their lessons carefully with clear objectives to enable progress. Teaching demonstrates good understanding of the various educational pathways and examination requirements, as well as of the needs of individual students. Marking standards have improved since the previous inspection and constructive comment and target-setting are evident in most subjects, in line with the whole-college approach towards assessment. Effective use is made of a marking 'cover-sheet' to provide helpful feedback to students about their work. Greater use is now being made of the statistical analysis of progress to identify any need for additional support and to direct this appropriately.
- 3.11 Lessons are typically conducted at an appropriate pace, making good use of time. Most teachers set a variety of tasks, which show good subject understanding and are appropriately matched to the individual needs of students, some of whom come to the college from overseas with specific goals, not least where their use of English is concerned. The students are nurtured and clearly directed along a suitable pathway to achieve their objectives. Good use is often made of educational resources to enrich teaching, in spite of the constraints of some aspects of the building. However, a minority of teaching is unimaginative and lacking in variety of style, although it achieves success within a flexible curriculum because it is well directed and is informed by a close knowledge of the students and their needs. Classroom displays are adequate but do not often show students' work. The effort grade system is appropriately emphasised and students appreciate the grades and reports, which lead to discussions with tutors and the setting of targets.
- 3.12 The teaching supports students with EAL effectively and students responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire appreciated the individualised help they receive. Where special educational needs have been identified, teachers have adapted their approach and resources to match the needs. Small class sizes, some more like tutor groups, are highly valued by the college staff, the students and their parents and enable teachers to direct more challenging questions to abler students in order to stimulate their interest. The caring, professional, approach of the teaching staff ensures an effective working environment. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and interviews confirmed the confidence students have in their teachers to direct their studies and to tailor their programmes of study.
- 3.13 The college ensures that teaching would make the provision set out in any statement of special educational needs although no current pupil needs such a plan.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent.
- 4.2 The college is successful in its aim to guide students to respect and value one another. This is a community with young people from many countries as well as from a variety of backgrounds, faiths and cultures within the city and surrounding area. They are valued and nurtured within an environment where the principal emphasis is that of respect – for people, place and property. Parental responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire comment favourably on their child's behaviour and confidence and are appreciative of the change effected by the college.
- 4.3 Students' strong spiritual development is evident in their everyday exchanges within the college. They are thoughtful, courteous, friendly, confident and self-aware. They appreciate non-material aspects of life and the significance of faith in the lives of believers. Some students use a classroom that is available as an occasional prayer room and the college has close links with a neighbouring chapel. Students throughout the age range are emotionally mature and respond warmly to being treated as individuals who are on first-name terms with their teachers. This enhances their regard for the college staff, with whom they have a good rapport.
- 4.4 At all levels, students show clear moral development, a sense of fair play, justice and decency, as is seen in tutorials, classroom debates and PSHE lessons. They appreciate British values, such as tolerance and mutual regard, as being part of the college fabric even though they are not familiar with articulating them. There are few obvious rules in the college but there is an evident sense of order and orderliness.
- 4.5 Students have a strong sense of social awareness, as is demonstrated by their support for local and international charities, involving fundraising, visits and publicising needs. Corridor displays indicate a concern for those less fortunate than themselves as well as an understanding of economic issues. There are no official student positions of responsibility within the college, although some roles within charitable help do emerge. Students indicated in their questionnaire responses that they would like more opportunity to take responsibility in the college, and the inspectors agreed that this would be beneficial. 'Achieving Success Together' is a college motto, and this is amply supported by the spirit of cooperation evident in the student community.
- 4.6 The college population has become more international since the previous inspection. Students from overseas integrate well and work happily with domestic British students in classes, tutorials and the enrichment programme. The Model United Nations, the final regional round of which is hosted at Abbey College, provides a good focus for a positive multi-cultural emphasis. At the same time, living in a major city ensures that students are well acquainted with British life and culture.
- 4.7 Students leave the college at different stages depending on their educational pathway but, whatever their leaving age, it is evident that they reach a high standard of personal development. Lengthy travel for some and home-stay or residential arrangements for others, often involving self-catering, ensures that their independence is nurtured and valued. When matters go wrong in college, a disciplinary committee of relevant staff is convened, which encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and the consequences. Pupil surveys and the

pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that students like the college and appreciate all it does to build their self-esteem and direct their development and future progress.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.8 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.9 Staff provide sensitive and effective support and guidance to students, in line with the college aims. Students have a variety of adults to whom they can look for advice and help. Tutor teams, led by the heads of year, work to an annual tutorial plan designed to ensure that students' progress is rigorously monitored and that data collection is used to enhance teaching and learning. Tutors see their tutees daily at registration sessions and in the extended weekly tutorial periods that are used to help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare them for higher education and their future careers, and to help them make a positive contribution to the community.
- 4.10 Excellent relationships exist between students and staff. This is fostered in the early stages by a thorough induction programme. Members of staff build up a detailed knowledge of the needs of each student and, in the case of international students, this is augmented by the work undertaken by the international foundation department. Trust created between students and staff in the early days develops and matures to create a college atmosphere where respect is paramount and both staff and students flourish in a community with shared goals.
- 4.11 The college has some success in securing the views of students, although the range of methods used is limited and a minority of students responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their views are not adequately heard. The college conducts occasional student surveys but no formal forum exists for students to express their views. At interview, however, inspectors found the students to be confident that they are able to speak openly to staff and tutors.
- 4.12 The college encourages students in lessons, and through the PSHE programme, to adopt a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating and taking exercise. It has robust procedures for dealing with any form of substance misuse.
- 4.13 Students behave well. They are considerate and polite. During interviews, students reported that bullying is rare and that they are confident that if it occurred it would be effectively handled by the staff. Their views were confirmed by scrutiny of the records kept by the college, which revealed that the very small number of cases recorded had been carefully managed.
- 4.14 The college is aware of its duty to students with special educational needs or disabilities. College staff appreciate the multitude of factors that contribute to students' social and academic development, and their work is supplemented by professional guidance provided by the college nurse and the counsellor. The college has a suitable three-year disability access plan to improve accessibility to the curriculum, to information and to the college buildings for all students.

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

- 4.15 The arrangements made for welfare, health and safety are sound.
- 4.16 The college's safeguarding procedures, whilst good in some areas, have deficiencies in others. The safeguarding policy was amended during the inspection

to bring it fully into line with regulatory requirements, particularly the most recent ones. The college has made strong links with local safeguarding agencies so that any concerns about students are referred without delay. Careful records of safeguarding concerns are kept. Staff and other adults working with students are properly trained on a three-year cycle.

- 4.17 The college's procedures for checking the suitability of new staff are in line with the requirements, but have not been rigorously implemented so that DBS checks are always fully completed before the appointee starts work, or promptly and accurately recorded on the single central register in accordance with the regulations. The college has taken all possible steps to remedy these deficiencies.
- 4.18 Measures taken to reduce risk from fire in the main college premises are rigorous. Risk is meticulously assessed. Fire safety equipment is properly maintained, and regularly checked. Evacuation practices are conducted regularly and carefully recorded. Accommodation for a number of overseas students, aged sixteen or over, is arranged in a student residence by APEL, at the college's suggestion, but fire evacuation practices on this site have not been conducted in 'boarding time', nor have they been recorded with the same rigour as at the main college site.
- 4.19 A comprehensive and well-implemented set of health and safety policies and procedures ensures that at the college premises all necessary checks are scrupulously conducted and recorded. Careful risk assessments are carried out for activities and trips. Appropriate arrangements are made for students who are sick and the college is equipped with a lift to enable access for those who are disabled.
- 4.20 The attendance and admission registers are correctly kept and stored for the required period. The admission register now contains full details of students' former schools, as is required.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.21 The overall quality of boarding is good.
- 4.22 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Students who board are confident, self-reliant and independent. They represent a harmonious group of young people from diverse international backgrounds who are tolerant and supportive of each other, thus creating a vibrant boarding community. With the outstanding support of excellent host families and staff, the students quickly develop a sharp focus on their future. Those who live with individual families are rapidly assimilated into their host's routines and make significant contributions both socially and culturally. Older students living in the accommodation block in Cavendish Place enjoy and appreciate the benefits of high quality self-catering accommodation, subsequently acquiring many of the necessary skills they require for the next phase in their lives. Students are highly appreciative of the work of those who care for them and are overwhelmingly positive about their experience as boarders. All boarders take advantage of their city location and benefit from access to world-class sporting, entertainment and academic institutions. Students with EAL actively seek out those who are strong in literacy to ensure they progress quickly. This in turn leads to cultural acceptance and the development of a unique college atmosphere.
- 4.23 The quality of the boarding provision is good. The accommodation with host families is arranged following a comprehensive vetting process, which is focused on ensuring the security and safety of the students. The college recommends to parents details of approved accommodation. Whilst the style, size and location of the

accommodation vary, it is all suitable for the age and gender of the students, and provides appropriate facilities both for studying and for recreation. Private dwellings are regularly inspected by the college and are extremely clean and well maintained. Host families make significant efforts to ensure boarders are made welcome and, together with the college, provide them with a comprehensive induction programme. Staff and host families assist students to register with local GPs and to access other dental and medical services as required. Host families liaise effectively both with the college and with parents whenever a significant medical need arises. During the day, students have access to the first-aid room at college and to a suitable number of staff with first-aid qualifications. The first-aid room is appropriately equipped. During the inspection, no prescribed medicine was being stored in the first-aid room. In the evening and at night, students have access to their host family or to the resident staff in the accommodation block, who will call a doctor or take them to hospital, if necessary. The college and host families hold up-to-date medical details for each student. Medication given to students is carefully recorded and all parties informed. Host families provide students with two substantial, well-planned meals a day, as well as the facility of a 'packed lunch', and take every care to provide for specific dietary need and allergies. Boarders have every opportunity to contact parents, via mobile 'phone, e-mail, text and video-conferencing.

- 4.24 The effectiveness of the arrangements for safety and welfare is sound. The college has established suitable mechanisms to ensure that all host families are aware of its child protection policies and that appropriate training is provided at regular intervals. However, the overall quality of boarding safety and welfare cannot be considered better than sound because the college does not meet all of the NMS with respect to ensuring suitable fire evacuation practices in the student accommodation block at Cavendish Place, and to completing teaching staff recruitment procedures before appointees start work. All hosts and resident staff have satisfied the recruitment checks which ensure their suitability to take up their position as carers of young people. Boarding students report very little, if any, bullying at the college and this is confirmed by scrutiny of the college records. The students have every confidence in the staff to help them solve any problems that may arise. The students complete a questionnaire designed to offer the college constructive criticism about their accommodation. The results are discussed with hosts by the school. At interviews, boarders confirmed that appropriate changes follow. Students are provided with training in how to keep safe in their dwellings, and this includes information on fire safety and the need to complete fire evacuation drills. Fire evacuation practices are conducted in the student accommodation block at Cavendish Place, but not at suitable times and accurate records are not kept. Students at Cavendish Place are required to return by a set time in the evening, although procedures for checking their return rely heavily on co-operation. Where closed circuit television cameras are used to enhance student safety, they are not invasive of privacy. Boarders are clear that they feel safe and that they are confident in being able to report any issues they may have.
- 4.25 The effectiveness of leadership and management is good. The day-to-day leadership and management of the boarding accommodation is highly effective. The college's senior managers have undertaken a comprehensive review of boarding, as part of the college being registered to accept boarders in June 2014. The review has resulted in new handbooks for UK and international boarders. The boarding handbook and the guidance given to host families have both been amended to include the most recent official guidance on keeping children safe. At the time of the inspection, the college had identified a new independent listener and was about to

introduce her to the students, although her details had not yet been publicised to the students. However, students did have access to a nurse and a counsellor, each of whom is available to students one day a week. All the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that their child enjoys boarding, that the experience is comfortable, that their child is safe, that the experience helps the students' progress and development and that it is well organised and managed effectively. These positive responses are supported by those of the boarders, with all of those who responded to the questionnaire feeling that boarders get on well together and the great majority reporting that life at the college and being a boarder is enjoyable. The college is successful in its aim to ensure that the host families are an extension of the college itself. This teamwork is enhanced by the links made between the accommodation office and the host family parents.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The directors of the Alpha Plus Group have designated one of their number to have particular responsibility for colleges and to pay regular and frequent visits to the college. This governor and some of his professional advisers are well known and respected at the college. His visits to the college are carefully planned to include formal reviews of different aspects of the college's life, including safety and safeguarding, and regular contact with both staff and students. This, together with the regular reports that the governors receive from the college, enables them to exercise oversight over how well the college is fulfilling its aims, to monitor educational standards and to manage its finances so as to ensure sufficient resources are available to support its educational aims and enable continuing development of its premises.
- 5.3 Governors provide support, challenge and stimulus for growth through their general policies and the standards that they set for colleges and schools in the group. Some governors are not so well known to the college and this is reducing the potential impact of their initiatives and, combined with the number of schools and colleges with which they are involved, their close knowledge of the affairs of the college.
- 5.4 The governors are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare, health and safety of the students, and both safeguarding and health and safety are regular items for discussion at their monthly meetings. The safeguarding policy and the effectiveness of its implementation are reviewed on an annual basis. Nonetheless, at the time of the inspection, the college did not consistently meet all the regulations as required, despite the procedures that the governors have established.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management of the college and of its links with parents, carers and guardians is good.
- 5.6 In many respects, the college benefits from strong leadership and effective management. The senior leadership team work effectively together to provide clear educational direction in support of the college aim to provide an education which guides students to academic success and ensures mutual respect. They share a fundamental belief in and a firm commitment to the ethos of the college – 'achieving success together' – and this is reflected in the good quality of the education provided and the students' excellent personal development.
- 5.7 At all levels, those with management roles mostly discharge their responsibilities effectively so as to achieve the aims of the college. The day-to-day administration of the college is efficiently organised. The recently introduced management structure has been well received by the staff. However, some senior and middle managers still do not feel sufficiently empowered to lead initiatives and to ensure that key processes are monitored and implemented. Heads of faculties and departments lead by example and are accountable for the performance of their departments, but

faculty meetings are infrequent. The management team is generally successful in implementing procedures with regard to safeguarding, welfare and health and safety, although some deficiencies in the recruitment of staff were identified.

- 5.8 The college benefits from clear leadership. A detailed and extensive development plan has been constructed which identifies key areas for further improvement. Departmental development plans are aligned with the college plan and all staff are made fully aware of the key aims and objectives of the college. The leadership team is highly effective in self-evaluation and this process demonstrates how well they understand the college and that some excellent processes are in place to analyse achievement, appraise the staff and set clear targets in order to enhance the experience of the students.
- 5.9 All staff are suitably inducted on joining the college, including in safeguarding procedures. They are encouraged, through the continuous professional development process, to attend training in order to support both their personal development as well as what is required to meet the aims of the college. They are regularly re-trained in safeguarding procedures.
- 5.10 The responses to the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Parents feel that they receive timely responses to their questions and that they can easily contact the members of staff who care for their child. A small minority of parents felt that they were not sufficiently encouraged to be involved in the life of the college but this was judged to reflect the fact that parents living abroad cannot be involved as much as they would like. Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the curriculum and the pastoral care, as well as the academic support given to their children.
- 5.11 The college amended its complaints procedure during the inspection to bring it in line with the requirement that a complaints panel must include at least one person independent of the governance and management of the college. Scrutiny of the records revealed that the college rarely receives formal complaints, but that parental concerns are handled in a timely and careful manner.
- 5.12 Links with the parents are good and support the aims of the college by involving all members of the college community, including parents, to achieve the effective education of the students. The college ensures that parents receive detailed information about the educational programme that has been devised for their child at enrolment. Parents receive regular information about the college and their children's progress. The college website, the newsletter (sent out twice a year) and the quarterly newsletter from the Abbey Davies Laing and Dick (DLD) group of colleges all provide parents with information about the college as well as informing them about opportunities to be involved in college life. The college uses social media effectively to keep parents up-to-date with college life.
- 5.13 Full reports are sent to parents twice a year providing feedback on the progress that their child has made, but these reports focus principally on encouragement rather than providing parents with information on how their children could improve and setting clear targets. The parents also receive two grade and effort reports per year. Parents and guardians are invited to the college to discuss progress and the next stage of their child's education at an annual parents' meeting. The college appreciates that it is not always possible for international parents to attend this meeting and parents are made welcome to visit the college whenever they are in the country or to make contact about their child's progress by other means.

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