



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports  
For Schools with Residential Provision**

**Cambridge Centre for Sixth-form Studies**

**October 2018**



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### School's Details

<b>College</b>	Cambridge Centre for Sixth-form Studies			
<b>DfE number</b>	873/6021			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1084601			
<b>Address</b>	4-5 Benet Place Lensfield Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 1EL			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01223 716890			
<b>Email address</b>	office@ccss.co.uk			
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Stuart Nicholson			
<b>Chair of trustees</b>	Mr John Dix			
<b>Age range</b>	14 to 21			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	121			
	<b>Boys</b>	82	<b>Girls</b>	39
	<b>Day pupils</b>	36	<b>Boarders</b>	85
	<b>Seniors</b>	20	<b>Sixth Form</b>	101
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9 to 11 October 2018			

## **1. Background Information**

- 1.1 Cambridge Centre for Sixth-form Studies is a co-educational international college. It offers day and boarding places for students aged between 14 and 21 years. A board of trustees governs the college, which in September 2018 joined the Stephen Perse Foundation, of which it is now a subsidiary. Since the previous inspection, the boarding accommodation has been extended and refurbished.
- 1.2 The college was established in 1981 in the centre of Cambridge to provide one-year GCSE and one- and two-year A-level courses for British and international students. Students making the adjustment to the English education system from overseas have the option of a year-long programme before beginning academic study. Teaching and boarding premises are located separately around central Cambridge. Arts, sciences and modern foreign languages are taught in one building and social sciences, humanities and mathematics taught on another site within walking distance.
- 1.3 The three boarding houses are located in close proximity to the teaching sites. One of these is for male students alone and the other two accommodate both male and female students.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.4 The college aims to prepare students for the demands and possibilities of adult life by providing them with challenging teaching, encouragement and individual support, and enabling them to achieve independence whilst safeguarding and promoting their welfare. It also aims to help students respect diversity in an atmosphere of co-operation, integrity and openness.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.5 Students come from many parts of the world, including the United Kingdom and the local area. Many nationalities, family backgrounds, faiths and cultures are represented. The majority of students are boarders, living in college accommodation. Nationally standardised test data provided by the college indicate that the ability of the students is broadly average and cohorts vary. The college has identified 28 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 6 of whom receive additional specialist help. Also, 2 students in the college have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 72 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards, including the boarding NMS, may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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 is a REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as met or as not met. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

### PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2015 to 2017, performance has been below the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2015 to 2017 have been in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

### PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 are met.**

## **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.12 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.14 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

- 2.15 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.16 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

- 2.17 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 **The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

**PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 **The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

**The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work.** It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

## Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Students' knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects are very well developed.
- Students' attitudes to learning are extremely positive.
- Students demonstrate advanced study skills.
- Overseas students make rapid progress in developing their communication skills.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Students are very generous in their tolerance and acceptance of all faiths and backgrounds.
- Students show a clear awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, and a marked desire to improve.
- Students have high levels of independence and maturity.
- Students' social awareness is outstanding.
- Students have an excellent moral compass, as evidenced by their conduct in school and in boarding houses.

## Recommendation

3.3 In the context of these excellent outcomes, the college might wish to consider:

- Developing a more formal approach to monitoring students' progress in order to ensure the provision of consistent and rapid support strategies.

## The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Students of all abilities fulfil their potential because of the college's response to individuals' needs through a highly flexible curriculum, small class sizes which ensure personal attention in teaching and an ethos that encourages students to take responsibility for their learning. Students' knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects are very secure. They are highly adept at applying their knowledge and understanding from one area of the curriculum to another. For example, in a sociology lesson students were able to express their understanding of religion as a force for social change whilst discussing Marxist theories and liberation theology. Students apply theory to practice with confidence, for example in an art lesson where they were able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in using tone and proportion to recreate portraits in the style of Yousef Karsh. They show a very strong awareness of prior learning and are highly effective at solving problems. A number of overseas students remarked that they have developed the ability to apply higher order thinking skills in ways they had not experienced before coming to the college. They value the high expectations of their teachers, who challenge them to think for themselves, for example in arriving at an intelligent understanding of the differences between the powers of the British prime minister and the president of the United States in a politics lesson.
- 3.6 Students, including those with EAL, communicate effectively using correct, subject-specific terminology. For example, in an A-level geography class, students with EAL were able to explain the causes of earthquakes in an articulate way and produce a convincing vulnerability profile. Overseas students appreciate the strong emphasis in teachers' planning on equipping them with the appropriate linguistic tools that they need, both to access subject content and to articulate effectively their understanding. They acknowledge the value of the extra support they receive in dedicated EAL lessons, which enable them to make rapid progress in their comprehension and writing. More able students show excellent written skills, notably in Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) submissions and in discursive essay writing across a number of subject areas. They are able to express complex ideas with clarity, using sophisticated language. Students are excellent listeners and are respectful of each other's views which are mostly expressed logically, persuasively and often passionately. Students are well informed and happily engage in reading beyond the confines of the examination specification. Inevitably for some of the newer students, reading and writing skills are less well developed. The fact that, over time, students become confident, fluent and articulate speakers and writers of English is a strong testimony to the skill of the teachers and the generous support provided by the college.
- 3.7 Students apply numeracy skills confidently and competently across a range of subjects. They are able to draw sensible conclusions from data and use pie charts effectively, for example in geography to illustrate different water usage between developed and developing countries. They display proficiency in drawing graphs to illustrate trends in economics, business studies, sociology and psychology. At A-level, scientists use their mathematical ability to solve complex equations. Those who arrive with extremely well-developed mathematical skills are challenged to perform increasingly intricate calculations, for example when determining the ideal gas law in chemistry. Weaker mathematicians successfully master the skills they need in various subject areas, because small-group support is provided for those students who are identified as struggling with core skills and concepts.
- 3.8 Students are very competent users of information and communication technology (ICT), especially to research projects. They recognise it as a useful tool for compiling and organising their notes when they draft extended pieces of writing. Those taking A-level computer studies displayed excellent technological skills as they worked towards designing a piece of software using different types of coding, with some able to create a sophisticated app for organising personal finances. Others have shown an excellent understanding of animation techniques and an ability to apply them, culminating in the production of a remarkable film on the history of the genre for an EPQ. In keeping with the school's ethos, students make their own choices about the extent to which they use ICT to help them

study. They make very effective use of the range of online resources that is available to them across the curriculum.

- 3.9 Students have excellent study skills. They make detailed notes in class and take initiative in their learning through, for example, well-researched projects and their eagerness to ask for help when they need it. They thoroughly enjoy the many opportunities they are given to debate, discuss and analyse, thereby deepening their understanding. They show excellent reasoning skills and use previous knowledge to synthesise ideas in order to ask pertinent searching questions, for example in an economics lesson where students intelligently elicited further explanation and information on supply and demand. They confidently form and justify hypotheses, for example in a business studies lesson where students successfully evaluated pricing strategies. They take advantage of their free time to seek out the help and guidance of their teachers in boarding houses, as well as in college, in order to clarify any problems that they experience in their learning. More able students, particularly those studying A-level courses in one year, cope very well with the brisk pace of lessons, whilst smaller class sizes and the individual attention they afford benefit those who find the rate of learning challenging. Students respond positively when they are encouraged to think logically and link ideas. For example, they are enabled to speak passionately about the way in which A-level subjects empower them to synthesise their ideas about how society works.
- 3.10 Almost all students over the last five years have gone on to higher education. Many students go on to study at universities with demanding entrance requirements in the UK and abroad. They benefit from the committed and valuable guidance of their tutors. Analysis of students' external examination performance is based on the three-year period 2015 to 2017, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results in GCSE examinations have been below the national average, though scrutiny of individual performances in these very small cohorts confirms that they represent good and often excellent progress. Results in IGCSE biology, English and English literature have been higher than worldwide norms, whilst in chemistry, physics, and mathematics they have been similar to worldwide norms. Results in A-level examinations have been in line with the national average. Data provided by the college indicate that A-level results in 2018 were broadly in line with these previous results, whilst at GCSE and IGCSE there has been a significant improvement. Lessons, examination results and work seen, as well as what students said about their academic achievements, confirm that overall students of all ages and abilities make good progress in relation to their starting points. Data used by the college to review results at A level show that students with SEND or EAL and the most able make similarly good progress.
- 3.11 Students achieve notable successes in academic competitions, such as in chemistry and biology Olympiads where they have won gold awards. Others with EAL have won top prizes for outstanding A-level results. A number of students take part in the choir and orchestra, formed from other schools in the Stephen Perse Foundation, and perform to a high standard. Students display excellent debating skills through their involvement with Model United Nations, Young Enterprise and the European Youth Parliament. A small minority of parents' and students' questionnaire responses suggested that the college does not provide a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Inspection evidence shows that, whilst the range of activities available in the college itself is quite limited, every effort is taken to encourage students to take advantage of other enrichment opportunities in the local community, from sports clubs and drama and musical groups to more intellectual pursuits.

- 3.12 Students are exceptionally focused and determined. They are ambitious and set themselves very high standards. They spoke with great enthusiasm about their enjoyment of lessons and the way in which they derive enormous satisfaction from surprising themselves by what they achieve. Students spoke with delight of how they achieve examination results much higher than those predicted on arrival in the college. Pupils with EAL participate in lessons actively, interacting enthusiastically with their peers as they work to improve their language skills and showing no embarrassment if they make linguistic errors. Students collaborate well in lessons and understand the benefit of making mistakes, reflecting maturely on them as they seek to improve. All of this stems from an ethos promoted by senior leaders which encourages acceptance and respect, and makes for a highly positive and inclusive learning environment.

## The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Students show outstanding social awareness. They accept the responsibility that the college encourages them to take for their own choices and are fully aware of how these choices impact on their peers, especially in boarding, where students happily make allowances for each other. This results in a community which is harmonious, inclusive and supportive, and where students are at ease with each other. They form warm friendships across year groups and backgrounds. They readily grasp opportunities to work collaboratively, both in and out of lessons, for example on a recent visit to an outdoor centre in Essex when they were able to develop their team-building skills and resilience on an obstacle course, and help each other conquer their fear of heights and enclosed spaces through climbing and caving activities. Students willingly use their different strengths to support each other in class and in the boarding houses. Students spoke warmly about the care afforded to each individual so that nobody gets left behind, and compared the boarding house to a big family that doesn't feel at all like a school because of the informal but professional relationships that exist between students and their teachers. Students say that this promotes a greater sense of co-operation, teamwork and mutual respect which they find motivating and liberating. Students also look beyond their life in college, gaining increased social awareness and a sense of balancing their own needs against those of others by making frequent contributions to wider society through fundraising. For example, they recently supported a campaign to collect socks for teenage Syrian refugees and raised money for a local homeless charity by selling and delivering roses in college for Valentine's Day. Members of the school council appreciate the opportunity to influence the quality of life for the whole college community by canvassing their peers and representing their views and ideas to senior leaders so that changes are implemented, for example the recent provision of new laundry equipment.
- 3.15 Students possess a high level of self-understanding and apply it effectively in order to gain the best possible outcomes in their academic work and personal lives. They are very confident, without being complacent or arrogant. For example, they are not afraid to express their opinions, even if they are potentially controversial. They reflect maturely on their learning and have high but realistic aspirations for the next stage of their education. Most students appreciate the constructive, individual feedback they receive, though the inspection found a lack of consistency in the identification of students requiring extra support.
- 3.16 Diversity and cultural understanding are central to the ethos and aims of the college and are embraced by the students with great enthusiasm. All students and parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the college encourages students to respect and tolerate other people. Students are proud of the way in which they come together to create a cohesive multicultural society where differences are appreciated and celebrated. They express with passion the importance of living together in harmony and being considerate to one another. Cultural inclusion is strong in the boarding houses, but day students said that they too are made to feel an equally important part of the college. It is normal for groups working together to be nationally diverse, for example when students of different nationalities celebrate Commonwealth Day and explore shared values of peace, democracy and equality.
- 3.17 Students have a keen appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They enjoy very high standards of philosophical debate and are happy to engage in impromptu discussions when interacting socially. They exhibit a well-developed sense of aesthetics as demonstrated, for example, by the outstanding student artwork around college. Students studying A level articulately and sensitively described their responses to key works of art that have inspired them. Encouraged by the college, students take advantage of the many cultural opportunities afforded by the city from concerts, exhibitions and drama to major cultural events such as a festival of ideas, to which a number of students have subscribed. Students enhance their spiritual development by celebrating and observing important religious and national festivals and seasons, particularly in the boarding community.

- 3.18 Students are able to make informed choices based on information that is provided or self-sourced. For example, they make sensible decisions about their choice of university and course, and the best use of their free time to pursue their interests in the local community. They seek advice and act on it, in the context of their studies and their wider lives, for example on how to manage their workload. They appreciate that tutors help them to consider options without ever telling them what to do. Overseas students considered that boarding has contributed to their growing independence and acknowledged that it has improved their ability to make decisions. They enjoy the freedom they have to make their own choices on how to manage their priorities and understand that these can be important in determining their future success. Students appreciate the importance of a well-balanced lifestyle and the need to look after their physical and mental health, particularly as they are very busy and active. A number of students take advantage of local gyms and sports clubs to maintain healthy levels of fitness. Whilst some students expressed reservations about the choice and quantity of food, a large majority appreciate the healthy options that are provided. Students were confident that they are well advised about their physical safety and that they know how to stay safe online.
- 3.19 Students have an extremely keen sense of what is right and wrong. They have complete regard and respect for the college's expectations, with the result that excellent behaviour prevails both in classes and in the boarding houses. Students spoke positively about a lack of regimentation which they say promotes self-regulation and a maturity of which they are very proud. In their responses to the questionnaire, all parents and students agreed that the college actively promotes good behaviour. Students show an acute sense of injustice; in an A-level geography lesson they expressed indignation at the additional impact of poverty and corruption on the misfortune of natural disasters in least developed countries. In work seen and in lessons observed, A-level law students demonstrated an excellent understanding of the British legal system and criminal law.
- 3.20 A number of students remarked on the new enthusiasm and motivation they feel for their studies since joining the college. They said that consequently their self-confidence and resilience have flourished, and they feel in control of their own lives as they prepare for the next phase.

## 4. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of trustees, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended tutor meetings. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Stephen Fox	Reporting inspector
Mrs Linda Smallwood	Accompanying inspector
Ms Alison Baines	Compliance team inspector (Principal, ISA school)
Mr Daniel Phillips	Team inspector (Head of department, HMC school)
Mrs Jane Tudor	Team inspector (Headteacher, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Sarah Hollingsworth	Team inspector for boarding (Headmistress, HMC school)