

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

CAMBRIDGE TUTORS COLLEGE

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Cambridge Tutors College

Full Name of School Cambridge Tutors College

DfE Number 306/6095
Registered Charity Number 312878

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Principal Mr Mario Di Clemente

Age Range 15 to 19

Total Number of Pupils 261

Gender of Pupils Mixed (131 boys; 130 girls)

Numbers by Age 15-16 **11** 16-19 **250**

Number of Day Pupils Total: 33 Capacity for flexi- 0

boarding:

Number of Boarders Total: 228

Full: **228** Weekly: **0**

Inspection dates 08 Feb 2011 to 09 Feb 2011

09 Mar 2011 to 11 Mar 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report 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 school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2007.

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 pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (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

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, 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 school 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 pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in March 2010 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school 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 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.

^{*}These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Cambridge Tutors College was founded as a tutorial establishment in Warlingham in 1958, moving to its present site in Croydon in 1967. In 1973 the college became an educational trust. Over recent years its client-base has changed considerably, from students who needed a "second chance" to take public examinations to mostly international students who wish to enter United Kingdom universities. This is the school's first full inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.
- 1.2 Students come mainly from professional and business families and are drawn from around twenty-five different countries. Most live with host families in and around Croydon. The great majority of the 261 students (131 boys and 130 girls) are from Asia and of these 80 are Chinese. Thirty-three students are from the United Kingdom. Eleven students are studying GCSE, one hundred and forty are studying at AS level and a further one hundred and ten at A level. Two hundred and twenty-two students have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom one hundred and eight have extra language support. The college has identified five students as having learning difficulties and /or disabilities (LDD).
- 1.3 Students are selected on the basis of academic achievement and potential, the recommendation of their previous school and their having sufficient English to benefit from the courses offered. The college does not carry out standardised ability testing of students entering to take GCSEs and so there is no baseline data on which to judge their ability. The ability profile of the sixth form is slightly above the national average for pupils taking A level, with a fairly wide spread of abilities represented.
- 1.4 The college's aims are to promote high academic standards, to foster international understanding through welcoming people of all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds, and to create an adult-focused environment to prepare students for higher education.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The college is helping its students achieve outstanding levels of performance, fulfilling its aims to promote high academic standards, to foster international understanding, and to prepare students for their future lives. Students make excellent progress, particularly through the sixth form. Most achieve very high standards in relation to their abilities. Results at GCSE are above the national average and at A level they are far above. Students benefit from the curriculum that is specially designed to meet their needs. Students achieve good standards in extra-curricular activities, with some, especially in the Olympiads, performing outstandingly. The overall quality of teaching is good and it is often excellent; it contributes strongly to students' progress, achievements and personal development. Teaching benefits from the clear planning and well-managed classes, though on occasions it is too closely directed by the teacher. An excellent assessment system provides first-rate information on students' progress week by week. The detailed marking of tests is extremely helpful to students.
- Overall, students' personal development is outstanding. Their relationships with other students and with staff reflect a growing spiritual and moral awareness. Students participate where they can in the various committees and are prepared to take on responsibilities; through this they gain a good understanding of the importance of political and social commitment. The broad ethnic base of the college community helps students towards a respect for the beliefs and actions of those from different cultures. A positive feature of the college is the high level of care, health, welfare and safety for students, with the exception of a clear record of who is off site at any given time. The provision for boarding is good, though opportunities for weekend activities are limited, an outcome of the homecare arrangements.
- 2.3 The excellent governance and management teams work closely to ensure that the agreed aims of the college are met. The ethos among staff and students is outstanding. The college has clear aims and appropriate priorities in its development plan. The management provides excellent leadership at all levels and the commitment of all the staff to the college's vision is outstanding. The college is well resourced and staff in-service training positively supported. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicate that parents are supportive of what the college does for their children and in discussion with inspectors students were extremely positive about what the college does for them.

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 school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
 - 1. Ensure that an attractive weekend programme of activities is arranged for students living with host families
 - 2. Provide in-service training that helps teachers to avoid directing pupils' work too closely.
 - 3. Ensure that a clear record is kept of those who are off the college site at any given time during the college day.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Overall, students' achievement is outstanding. Consequently, the college is making excellent progress towards achieving its aims of helping students to acquire high academic standards.
- 3.2 Students are confident in their approach to learning. Despite the fact that the great majority have English as an additional language they are articulate and communicate their ideas effectively. In science and mathematics they display exceptional skills, as in the dissection of a sheep's heart in biology and the use of algebraic equations in a Year 12 mathematics lesson. In information and communication technology (ICT) they work expertly. Those doing humanities perform well in a range of subjects from history to law. In history they have a good knowledge of the outline of 17th century English history and in geography develop understanding of the formation and erosion of land mass. In an economics lesson Year 13 students showed an excellent command of concepts within macroeconomics. Students have good command of subject-specific vocabulary.
- 3.3 Students achieve well in a number of extra-curricular activities, which contribute to their personal development. They gain bronze and silver awards in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and several achieve high performances year-by-year in the British Physics, Chemistry and Maths Olympiads. In 2010, for example, students gained five of the ninety-eight gold medals awarded nationally in the Physics Olympiad.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. For the small numbers of pupils involved, performance in GCSE has been above the national average for all maintained schools; performance in IGCSE has been above worldwide and UK averages. Over the same period, A-level results have been far above the national average and above the average for maintained selective schools; four-fifths of students obtained grades A or B. These results and inspectors' observations indicate excellent progress and achievement through the sixth form and ensure that most students enter the universities of their choice.
- 3.5 In lessons and written work students apply themselves exceptionally well, are keen to learn and respond willingly to the well-planned teaching. Written work is well presented, though some students' folders are not well organised. Students have a high level of commitment to learning and success, and although seemingly passive on occasions in lessons, display a commendable focus on their learning. They work hard in class and on homework. Throughout the college, behaviour is exemplary.

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

3.6 All students benefit from the well-constructed curriculum designed to meet their specific needs. Students across the ability range follow an examination-driven curriculum adapted by their teachers to meet their individual needs. This provision fully supports the college's aims to promote high academic standards and to prepare students for higher education, mainly in British universities.

- 3.7 All Year 11 students follow a core curriculum of English, mathematics, physical education, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and study skills alongside three options from art, sciences, economics, accounting, and ICT. They take a one year accelerated course for GCSE, which meets their needs well.
- 3.8 Students in Year 12 take up to four AS level courses. Many also follow a course to improve their English and meet the requirements of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Students in Year 13 normally take up to four Alevel courses, and where necessary continue with IELTS. The curriculum of Year 12 and 13 students is augmented by a range of PSHE-based lectures, usually presented by outside speakers.
- 3.9 Careers education provides the students with a good insight into the next stage of their education. Year 11 students are given advice on GCSE courses and likely AS courses. In Year 12 students benefit from a series of lectures given by outside speakers from universities and various professions. Year 13 students receive extensive advice on universities and on preparing their curriculum vitae. Students take the opportunities to research their future options, being supported in this by the excellent resources and personal advice from a senior member of staff.
- 3.10 The college has excellent provision for those students with LDD or EAL. The strong learning support department gives first-rate attention to the students through individual support and also guides other staff on how they might help the students in their normal classes.
- 3.11 Students enjoy a good, and growing, variety of extra-curricular activities which contribute well to their physical, social, cultural and spiritual development. They can attend a variety of sports clubs, including football, basketball, pool, table tennis and volleyball. Students run their own debating club and enjoy activities such as chess, the Christian Fellowship, access in the evenings to ICT, and the very popular Zumba dancing. Their interest in music is encouraged through a singing group, a musical appreciation society and the possibility of borrowing a musical instrument for personal practice. Students and staff co-operate to produce a school magazine and the student council organises social events such as the summer ball, international evenings and charity events. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is also hugely popular.
- 3.12 The selection of extra-curricular activities is largely driven by responses to the college's student questionnaires. The college is keen to develop a culture of participation. It has appointed two members of staff to oversee extra-curricular activities, has made funding available for staff training and for equipment, and has encouraged staff to give generously of their time and skills.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The quality of teaching is good overall and often outstanding. It fully supports the college's aim to achieve high academic standards.
- 3.14 Teachers are experienced and challenge students effectively. They are committed to giving students excellent opportunities to succeed in their studies. Teachers have clear objectives, teach at a brisk pace and ensure that students have a very effective grounding in their studies through paying particular attention to their strengths and weaknesses. Where teaching is best, teachers plan thoroughly, use resources effectively and seek to involve students in their own learning. Their knowledge of how well students are doing influences their planning and enables them to provide

appropriate help at the right time to enable individuals to overcome any difficulties. Students express their appreciation of the willingness with which their teachers support them. This applies to those having difficulties and those who are gifted and talented. On the few occasions on which teaching is less than good, it relies on too close direction by the teacher, which restricts the opportunities for students to investigate, discuss or work independently.

- 3.15 Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and the confidence they have in their own knowledge adds to the students' trust in them. As a result, students carry out the tasks set effectively, confident that they will further their learning and achievement. Praise and encouragement add to the mix and contribute to students fruitfully enjoying the subjects studied, and behaving in an exemplary fashion in lessons.
- 3.16 The college has spent much time in developing an excellent assessment policy. The use of weekly tests, recorded and available to the teachers, means that they know exactly how well students are progressing. Consequently, they can identify areas of weakness and where they need to provide extra help. This leads to individual target-setting for students, with teachers identifying the means to help them direct their efforts most beneficially. These factors contribute strongly to the high levels of achievement. The weekly posting of students' results on the college's portal means that parents are also well involved and through encouragement can positively contribute to their children's learning. The high quality of marking and perceptive comments contribute positively to the progress that students make.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Students' personal development is outstanding. Most students face the dual challenges of leaving home for the first time, staying with a host family and living in a different culture. The college supports them very effectively through these changes, fulfilling its aims to foster international understanding through welcoming people of all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds, and to create an adult-focused environment in which students can develop into mature, thoughtful, self-reliant and considerate young people.
- 4.2 Students recognise that within the college community there is the spirit of 'one big happy family'. The international nature of the student body helps them to appreciate their own uniqueness; and students' contributions to the supportive environment of the college enable them to develop self-awareness. Their success in their studies and their ability to create strong relationships contribute to their obvious confidence. The college offers no specific religious education but encourages its students to practise their faith through providing a prayer room for Moslems and facilities for the lively Christian Fellowship. The annual lecture programme also includes talks on major world faiths. Students recognise the distinctions between the secular and the spiritual as amply demonstrated in a classroom discussion on weddings in different countries.
- 4.3 The moral development of students is outstanding. Students cooperate with the college, responding positively to the clear expectations of adult behaviour. Relationships are excellent with staff and students treating each other with decency and dignity. Students maturely explore moral issues in their lessons, as demonstrated in physics where the West's concern about Iran's development of nuclear weapons generated a lively debate on the moral issues at stake. Students also feel a moral responsibility for those less well off than themselves and recognise the moral and physical contribution they can make to charities. For example, representatives on the students committee organise charity days and cake sales to raise money while the Christian Fellowship supports a student in Uganda.
- 4.4 Students' social development is generally excellent. They have extremely well-developed personalities and are mature for their age. They are independent and self-reliant, adapting well to living away from home and in a different country. They are confident, reflective and considerate young people who respect others and appreciate the efforts made to help them with their studies and with their stay in England. Many students develop responsibility through running college activities and being involved in student groups such as the students committee. They demonstrate team work in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme and in the Young Enterprise scheme. In lessons, students consider social issues such as the different treatment of prisoners in British and Chinese society. Students and staff clearly enjoy their interactions in and out of the classroom, and recognise that different cultures demand different responsibilities.
- 4.5 Much of the student's very strong cultural development is embedded in the college's international nature. This breeds respect for the cultures and faiths of others. Students appreciate and respect the different cultures and faiths of their peers and celebrate this diversity with regular international evenings where students wear national dress and entertain their peers with ethnic foods and concerts in their own musical traditions. Students gain an understanding of British culture from visits to art

galleries and college trips to other cities. The impact on their understanding of living with a host family is also significant. College staff also reflect several different cultures and are able to share with the students the outcome of such ethnic diversity through art and music.

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

- 4.6 The overall quality of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good. Students appreciate the tolerant and supportive atmosphere within the college, which emanates from the attitudes of both staff and students. Together, they contribute to creating the adult-focused environment which is a feature of the college and one of its aims.
- 4.7 The pastoral organisation of the college provides well for the students. The tutor system and the work of the welfare office together provide an effective structure that deals directly with student concerns, both in college and in their boarding accommodation. Students appreciate the help they are given and know that they have adults to turn to should they have personal problems. They report that the atmosphere in the college is friendly and without intimidation and that host families are carefully chosen with their needs in mind. Although they recognise that students of the same nationality tend to spend time with one another, this is not to the detriment of their relationships with others. As a result, pupils feel secure and cared for.
- 4.8 The college has good policies and procedures in place for pupils' welfare. It has clearly laid-down policies to promote good behaviour, to deal with bullying and to ensure positive behaviour management. These are published on the college e-portal for access by parents and in every student's planning diary. The safeguarding policy meets all requirements and is implemented successfully. All staff are trained in child protection and training also forms part of the induction process. Health and safety procedures are good and appropriate measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. All electrical appliances are properly tested. Comprehensive risk assessments cover buildings and grounds, subject areas and external visits.
- 4.9 Students appreciate the care they are offered when unwell, and speak positively about the support they receive; for example, the welfare office makes doctors' appointments and, if the need arises, takes students by car to their homestay accommodation. They say there is no bullying. The college has an accessibility plan designed to overcome the difficulties in the oldest building when the funds become available. The newer buildings are all fully accessible.
- 4.10 Students are encouraged to be healthy by developing good eating habits. The catering department provides a range of food options freshly prepared on a daily basis and students appreciate the recent innovation, largely driven by the student food committee, of opening between 8 am and 3.30 pm daily.
- 4.11 Students of compulsory school age are appropriately registered each day. The admissions and attendance registers are accurately maintained and information stored electronically. However, there is no record kept of when students leave the premises, whether temporarily or at the end of their lessons, and therefore no record of who is on site in the case of an emergency.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.12 The quality of boarding is good. The college operates a homestay accommodation programme whereby students live in family homes within easy commuting range of the college. Host families accommodate students in single study bedrooms, some of which are en suite. In some cases there are two or three students accommodated in the same house, but in their first year students of the same nationality are not hosted together, to foster greater integration. The system works well and provides safe and secure accommodation for the students. It also helps to develop a responsible maturity among students that is preparing them effectively for later life.
- 4.13 The college welfare office is proactive in interviewing potential host families and it inspects all homestays once a year. The welfare staff respond quickly to any matters raised by the students or their hosts. Alongside this, all students are interviewed by their academic tutors at least once a term specifically about their accommodation. Students are universally positive about the hosting arrangements and report that the facilities on offer are consistently good. The homestay accommodation visited by inspectors fulfilled the requirements for facilities and for cleanliness.
- 4.14 Host families undergo an enhanced CRB check and all references are verified. Students, upon reaching the age of eighteen, may move into flats which are rented through an agency. This currently involves between fifteen and twenty students. The college accepts that older students may have this degree of independence, but it does not encourage this movement away from host families. It does, however, ensure that the accommodation meets expected requirements.
- 4.15 Students have access to a range of activities at the end of the college day, both inside and outside the college, and occasional activities at weekends, such as visits to art galleries and Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions. The student committee has also arranged a small number of events. However, the college currently provides only a very limited range of activities to its students at weekends, being discouraged by the poor student take-up. As a result, students are not getting the full benefit of what boarding has to offer.
- 4.16 The two recommendations of the latest Ofsted boarding report, that there be further ongoing consultation with students over the quality of food and that a proper record with regard to staff vetting information be kept, have both been implemented by the college.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- The quality of governance is excellent and is a key factor in the college's success. The Trust Council contains members who are drawn from professions such as education, law and business. A particular strength is that half of the members are serving staff at the college. This ensures that the Council is fully aware of the college's progress, its needs and its successes. The chair of the Council is in regular contact with the principal, has an excellent grasp of the quality of its provision and future needs, and provides effective support.
- The Council is concerned with the financial stability of the college and its strategic planning, and it is committed to the college's aim to ensure effective educational provision for the students in its care. Those in governance are fully aware of their responsibilities, carefully considering reports from the college's senior management, using their wide expertise to evaluate the college's performance in relation to students' achievements and personal development, and ensuring that procedures for staff appointments are appropriate. The Council carries out its responsibilities in relation to child protection and to students' health, safety and welfare; appropriate CRB checks have been carried out. Members maintain an active interest in recruitment, checking the suitability of staff, the resourcing of teaching and the quality of the accommodation.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 Management and leadership are outstanding and work successfully to fulfil the aims of the college. The senior management team, backed by the staff, has a clear vision as to how to manage progress. They recognise the type of student for which the college is catering and the particular reasons for which they have come. The aims are totally appropriate and the college is working successfully towards fulfilling them.
- The governors and senior management team have made important decisions about what is likely to be most effective in terms of curricular provision and how to best support it with sufficient resources and suitably qualified staff. The expectations of the staff are fully understood by all and so the pervading ethos is one based on mutual understanding and support.
- 5.5 The relatively small number of staff means that only a few subjects have a departmental structure. Many teachers work within their subjects as individuals. To overcome this, a system of curriculum groups has been established which enables teachers to exchange ideas and share good practice. This results in a similarity of approach among the staff and general agreement as to the direction in which the college should move. Where a need is recognised, senior management does what it can to meet it and staff speak highly of the opportunities made available to them. The college has a good approach to in-service training for staff and to the induction of teachers new to the college.
- The process of development planning is thorough and involves staff and governors at different stages. The bi-annual appraisal system combines interviews and lesson observations to enable worthwhile targets to be set for teachers which can be supported by appropriate in-service training. The monitoring of teaching and

- learning is carried out at different levels, sometimes as part of the appraisal system but more usually as part of the general evaluation process. Written records are kept.
- 5.7 An effective process of safeguarding and safe recruitment exists which, along with a commitment to welfare and safety, ensures that the students feel well cared for and safe. Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and pupils' welfare. The centralised register of appointments is in order. Excellent administrative procedures ensure that the college runs smoothly, information is properly disseminated and the college is kept clean and tidy.

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

- The college has a good relationship with parents and guardians, despite the fact that the majority live overseas. Through effective internet links, parents are able to contact the college and keep in touch with their children. This is particularly so with regard to the weekly assessments in each subject. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents indicated that they were satisfied with the way the college makes information available to them, and with the way it deals with any concerns. Inspectors' findings concur with these judgements.
- 5.9 The college provides full termly reports and these are forwarded to parents both by e-mail and as hard copies. Results of the weekly tests are also published via the portal to which all parents have access through an individual code. The school magazine, published twice a year, is also made available. The college uses agents from time to time to liaise with overseas parents, especially with those not fluent in English, and sends information through them. This is not only important in relation to general information but particularly so when concerning any breaches of college discipline. Contact with United Kingdom based parents is more straightforward as they can have easy access to the college as well as the portal.
- 5.10 The nature of the college's intake means that there is very little direct involvement by parents in the life of the college. There is an annual parents' meeting and this can be attended by parents who are in the country at that time. It has become common for the parents of the January entry students to arrive with their offspring. This provides an opportunity for the college to welcome them through providing a tour of the buildings and the occasional buffet dinner for parents and staff.
- 5.11 The families who host boarders have direct contact with the College through the welfare office. Some are very pro-active in managing students, even to the extent of attending college functions in the manner of actual parents. In the main, however, they see their role in a more limited way.
- 5.12 Parents are made aware of the college's policies and procedures related to discipline, and the likely outcome of misbehaviour is explained through the college's portal. The detailed complaints policy is compliant with regulations, and ensures that parents are aware of their rights.

What the school 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 students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited a host family and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Terry Dillon Reporting Inspector

Mr Roger Leake Headmaster, ISA school

Mrs Cathy Williamson Former Deputy Head, GSA school

Mr Matthew March Senior Master, HMC school