



Office for Standards
in Education

Stafford House College

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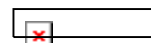
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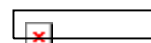
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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY



Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Stafford House College is privately owned by the Cambridge Education Group. It has been established for 55 years. Founded in West London, the tutorial college moved to its present site in Canterbury in 1974. It provides education for male and female students aged from 14 to 20+ years. Currently there are 162 students on roll, of whom 16 are of compulsory school age. The vast majority of students are from overseas. The college is relatively small and prides itself on providing a friendly and supportive learning environment for its students.

The college offers a wide range of courses leading to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the International GCSE (IGCSE), a Junior Academic Programme (JAP), Advanced Supplementary (AS) and Advanced Level (A2). There are also university foundation courses and an English Language Programme (ELP). The relatively small number of students that attend the college between the ages of 14 and 16 are accepted for courses leading to the GCSE and IGCSE, and for programmes to improve their English language proficiency.

The college aims to help students to achieve their academic goals whilst enjoying the process of learning and getting the most out of Britain's culture and college life. The college defines its task as preparing the students both academically and socially for higher education in Britain.

Stafford House is based on several sites, all relatively close to the centre of Canterbury. The main teaching, boarding and administrative buildings are on New Dover Road, and there is an additional teaching block at Oaten Hill about three quarters of a mile from the main building. Other boarding premises are close by on Ethelbert Road. Overseas students of compulsory school age live with either host families in the local area or in the college's halls of residence. Sports facilities are rented at the nearby Kent County Cricket Ground.

Summary of main findings

Stafford House College is a good college. It meets most of the statutory requirements. However, there are a few weaknesses that the college needs to address.

What the school does well:

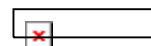
- students of all ages make good progress in learning English and nearly all older students proceed to university;
- particular care is taken to respond flexibly to the needs of students and to place them on courses that meet their individual academic requirements;
- the overall quality of teaching is good;
- the college works hard to promote a positive multi-cultural ethos;
- the college makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its students;
- the college's induction programme is a particular strength and is well regarded and appreciated by the students themselves; and
- a recent, extensive programme of refurbishment and redecoration has resulted in very good

accommodation for academic study.

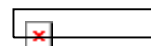
What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

- improve the careers provision for compulsory age students;
- standardise the completion of all attendance registers paying particular attention to the recording of the attendance of day students of compulsory school age;
- proceed with its current plans to improve disabled access to the New Dover Road site and draft a three year disabled access plan to underpin future developments in this respect;
- proceed with its current plans to increase the number of staff and student toilets, in particular those for females;
- ensure that details of all students' academic performance during the preceding year are made available to parents; and
- complete the development of full written procedures for handling complaints and make them available to students and parents.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION.



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum

A wide range of courses is available at the college. The structure of courses provides the opportunity for students to progress from learning English to university entrance. Care is taken by the college to place students on courses that meet their individual academic requirements and respond flexibly to their changing language needs. Most students follow the college's own university foundation programme, success on which guarantees students a place at partner universities. A small group of more advanced students take a master's foundation course prior to university entrance. There are currently nine students taking one year GCSE and IGCSE courses and 25 taking GCE AS and A2 courses. The remainder of the students, whose English is less well developed, take the college's own English Language Programme and Junior Academic Programme.

A broad range of subjects is available to all students. The curriculum for compulsory age students is appropriately broad and suitably balanced. The college is aware that creative and aesthetic aspects of the curriculum need to be developed further. Theatre studies, media studies and music have already been introduced as options and the college is planning to introduce art.

All compulsory school age students attend the college on a full time basis. Of the 16 students of compulsory school age, six are taking GCSE courses; of these, two are British and the remainder are overseas students. These students follow a core curriculum composed of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), personal, social and health education (PSHE) and games. The remaining compulsory school age students take English language

courses.

PSHE is integrated within the general studies programme. It is taken by all students and delivered by personal tutors and supported by outside speakers. Whilst the current provision is satisfactory, it should be reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of compulsory age students in full. Opportunities for careers education and guidance also need to be improved to provide the necessary support for compulsory age students. The college should consider how the generally good provision of physical education can be further developed to cater better for female students.

There are currently no students with statements of special educational need. The college has recently established a good system for identifying students with learning difficulties. These students are tested by an educational psychologist appointed by the college. Overall, support provision is good for the vast majority of students for whom English is an additional language.

The curriculum is set out in writing and is described in broad terms for parents in the college brochure. Planning and schemes of work are appropriate. The college should consider further developing the schemes of work to provide greater detail, particularly in relation to teaching methodology.

The college provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Of particular note are the charity committee, debating society, musical provision and drama presentations. The college should pay closer attention to recording participation in activities, particularly by the younger students.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The overall quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Nearly all teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and a sure grasp of the requirements of the programmes of study. At the same time, they place an appropriate emphasis on the development of students' study skills. Particularly good teaching was observed in physics, sociology, French, business studies, history, media studies, psychology and on the English Language Programme.

Lessons are generally well planned and follow a clear sequence. Teachers organise their classrooms to support their teaching style and to best meet the learning needs of their students. The best lessons proceed at a lively pace with a variety of activities that engage and stimulate the students; in sociology and psychology, astute questioning is used to develop students' higher order thinking skills and to extend their learning. Many teachers use praise and encouragement effectively to build the confidence of their students. In most lessons, particular care is taken to explain key terms and linguistic conventions; this ensures that the needs of students with English as an additional language are fully met. In the small minority of less effective lessons, the pace is allowed to drop and the teaching lacks variety with too few opportunities for active student participation.

A positive atmosphere characterises most lessons. Students work collaboratively with each other and co-operate well with teachers. A particular feature of many lessons is the good humour which underpins relationships between students and staff, for example in history and business studies.

Students generally make good progress, including those who enter with little English. In the few lessons where their achievement is unsatisfactory it is because of the language difficulties that they encounter and, in the case of a small minority of students in PSHE, a lack of engagement with the subject matter.

On entry, students have a range of attainment and English language skills. The college has good procedures for assessing them. These include baseline testing on entry in English and mathematics followed by regular progress tests, end of term assessments and mock examinations. As a result, the college has a large amount of performance data on each student. The college currently makes insufficient use of that data to plan and support students' learning and target setting, although there is good practice in some departments, notably economics and business studies and history. The

college might wish to consider how this can be spread across all subject areas.

The three-weekly progress tests are well marked with helpful comments and suggestions for further improvement. The college has a common marking and grading policy but this is not uniformly applied across departments. Students' notes are not checked on a regular basis. The college might wish to consider ways of helping students to develop their note taking skills.

The college could not provide details of all public examination results over the last three years. Procedures for storing this data are in need of review. GCSE results for the last two years show considerable fluctuation between subjects. Comparisons with national averages are made difficult by the fact that students take GCSEs at different ages and sometimes take the IGCSE instead. The most recent GCSE data for 2003 show that good results were achieved in chemistry, physics and mathematics. The overall pass rate for AS level in 2003 was just over 59 per cent, which is below the national average, and that for A2 was just over 93 per cent, which is above the national average. Good results were achieved in biology, chemistry, law, mathematics and sociology. The college is successful in securing entry to university for nearly all students.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

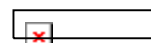
The college meets most of the requirements for registration, but there is one issue still outstanding.

What does the college need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the college should:

- *improve the careers provision for compulsory age students (paragraph 2g)*

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students



Overall, the college provides a good range of opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Its mission statement contains a strong commitment to this.

The curriculum affords satisfactory opportunities for students' spiritual development. For example, in a GCSE physics lesson, students observing an experiment to illustrate velocity were encouraged to pause, wonder and reflect. Students who wish to maintain religious observance are encouraged to do so; the college sets aside a room for quiet reflection and prayer for Muslim students during Ramadan. The college's plans for developing the creative curriculum will provide further opportunities for fostering students' spiritual development.

Provision for students' moral development is good. The principle opportunities for moral development are very clearly articulated in the college's policy on shared values. The class contract, drafted by students and teachers working together, outlines expectancies for the smooth conduct of lessons and is a practical application of these principles. Students have many opportunities within the curriculum to discuss the difference between right and wrong. For example, in a PSHE lesson students discussed the moral and social outcomes of drug taking. In a debating society meeting,

students were introduced to the arguments involved in the abortion question.

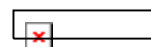
Provision for students' social development is also good. Students work well together in a secure learning environment; they are frequently encouraged to co-operate with one another. For example, in a good economics and business studies lesson, AS students worked effectively in small groups to design the packaging and a promotional campaign for a variety of products. During games, students of all ages engaged in team and paired activities. The active participation of large numbers of students in the work of the college's charity committee shows their developing awareness of the needs of others. The generally good behaviour and response of students in lessons reflect the overall positive social environment in the college.

Provision for students' cultural development is very good. Students from different countries and cultural backgrounds mix well together. The college places great emphasis on the opportunities presented by its international status. The induction programme for new students to the college introduces them to English and local traditions. In theatre studies, students are introduced to the British theatre. The planned introduction of art will afford further opportunities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The college makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its students. Clear and comprehensive policies are in place, for example, on health and safety, first aid, child protection, attendance and behaviour. The college's policies on anti-racism, promoting multi-culturalism and anti-bullying are exemplary and reflect its active commitment in these areas. Excellent support for the college in these matters is provided by the administrative services of the Cambridge Education Group based nearby, for example, in ensuring that there is a satisfactory level of fire safety, and in conducting and meticulously recording routine checks.

Staff are deployed in such a way as to ensure the proper supervision of students in nearly all respects. The college needs to consider how the supervision of younger students might be improved when they move between the college's two sites and go to the leisure centre.

The college has regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. At the time of the inspection, an inspection of boarding provision by the National Care Standards Commission was imminent. The college has responded positively to all recommendations made in the previous boarding inspection report of May 2000.

Pastoral arrangements for students are good and reflect the college's emphasis on high quality, individual pastoral care as the necessary underpinning of academic success. In this respect, the principal leads from the front, takes a personal interest in the welfare and development of each student, and is always available to deal with their concerns.

The progress and welfare of all students, especially those of compulsory school age, is carefully monitored by the college's Pastoral Care Committee, which brings together boarding and welfare staff and is well chaired by the vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care. This committee oversees a highly effective support structure for individual students as well as dealing with more general matters. The vice-principal co-ordinates the work of the personal tutors, who are each

directly responsible for the welfare of some seven or eight students. The college has recently introduced an impressive tutor induction programme outlining their responsibilities. A house system has also recently been established for administrative purposes; this provides an effective means of co-ordinating communication across the college and has potential for further development.

The college is aware of the importance of helping all students, especially those from overseas, to settle in as quickly as possible. To this end it has developed an effective student induction programme. It is a model of its kind and is well-regarded and appreciated by the students themselves. Thereafter, guidance and support are provided by the personal tutors, with whom students meet on a one-to-one basis at least once a week. Students know that they can also approach any member of staff for help when in difficulty, and this explains the relaxed and friendly atmosphere that characterises college life and underpins most lessons.

There is a clear policy on sanctions, and appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with misdemeanours or poor attitudes. Records are kept of any serious disciplinary matters and parents are involved at an early stage. The college operates a code of conduct and has a policy outlining shared values which is effective in promoting sensible behaviour and positive attitudes. As a result, the vast majority of students behave well and move around the site sensibly and safely. The admissions register complies with the regulatory requirements. The college moves swiftly to follow up student absences. The methods of recording attendance are inconsistent and do not meet statutory requirements for day students.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

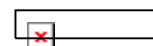
The college meets most of the requirements for registration, but there is one issue it must address.

What must the college do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the college should:

- *standardise the completion of all attendance registers paying particular attention to the recording of the attendance of all day students of compulsory school age (paragraph 3.9).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The college management works hard to secure its success. The proprietors, advised by the principal, have a clear strategic vision for the development of the college and have recently provided the resources to achieve it. The principal provides an effective lead and is in the process of establishing a management structure that is suitable for a college of this type.

Teaching staff are well qualified and a large proportion has the appropriate qualifications, in particular to meet the needs of overseas students. The staff profile shows a good balance between experience and teachers that are more recently qualified.

The college has good procedures for the induction of new staff. College records show that a number of staff have attended recent training courses. However, there are some areas where the college

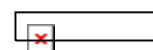
should focus further staff development, in particular to support the teaching of PSHE. The college should consider whether its present strategies for identifying the training needs of staff are adequate.

Procedures for undertaking checks on the suitability of all staff employed by the college are good.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



Overall, the college provides very good accommodation for academic study. Both the Oaten Hill and New Dover Road sites have recently been subject to an extensive programme of refurbishment and redecoration, which has been carried out to a particularly high standard. The college is planning some further renovation work as funding becomes available.

As a result, there are now good specialist facilities for ICT, physics, biology, chemistry and theatre studies, and a good quality art room has been created in anticipation of future course development. All departmental teaching rooms are conveniently situated, and classrooms are of a good size to accommodate all teaching groups, allowing a measure of flexibility in their lay-out and use. All rooms are appropriately equipped and there are sufficient resources to support activities. The standard of displays is more variable; although well-decorated with adequate display space, many classroom walls are stark with only limited examples of students' work in evidence.

Library accommodation is good. However, the range of the library stock is in need of review and reorganisation. The college is aware of the need for the further development of this facility.

As a result of the refurbishment programme, private study facilities for all students in and out of lesson time are much improved compared with the last inspection by HMI. There is unsupervised access to all study rooms until 8.00 p.m. each evening with additional, supervised access to the ICT suites and science laboratories.

The dining rooms, which are located at the halls of residence adjacent to the New Dover Road site, are bright and clean. However, there is limited space for the number of students wishing to eat there at lunchtimes, particularly since students from the sister language college also use the facility. There are long queues which can result in students missing opportunities to participate in clubs and societies. The college has plans to improve dining facilities.

The college does not currently fulfil all its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and disabled access to its facilities on the New Dover Road site is limited. The college is aware of this; plans are in hand to adapt the buildings to improve access, and bring them up to the standard of the recently refurbished Oaten Hill site.

Bearing in mind the recent expansion in student numbers, there are currently insufficient washrooms for staff and students using the New Dover Road site. For example, female administrative staff and students have to share the use of the ground floor toilets. The college has identified this deficiency, as well as the lack of disabled toilets, and has developed plans to rectify

the situation.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

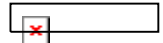
The college meets most, but not all, of the requirements for registration.

What must the college do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the college should:

- proceed with its current plans to improve disabled access to the New Dover Road site and draft a three year disabled access plan to underpin future developments in this respect; and*
- proceed with its current plans to increase the number of staff and student toilets, in particular those for females, (paragraph 5k).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The college is in the process of updating much of the information that it provides for current and prospective parents. Information is provided through the college prospectus and website. The prospectus is out of date in some significant respects, although most of the information is valid, including the description of courses and curriculum content. The college currently does not publish the results of public examinations.

A wide range of other information is available, including details about behaviour, and the health and safety and welfare of students. An outline of the interim complaints procedure is available on the college website.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

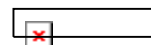
The college meets most of the requirements for registration, but there is one issue it needs to address.

What must the college do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the college should:

- ensure that details of all students' academic performance during the preceding year are made available to parents (paragraph 6.2i).*

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



The college has produced brief written procedures for handling complaints. This is an interim arrangement. It has been made available to parents and published on the college's website. This brief document contains succinct guidance on how to make complaints and the college's procedures for handling them, but these do not fully meet the requirements of the regulations. The students' handbook contains brief guidance to students about how they can make complaints.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

The college meets some of the requirements for registration.

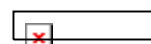
What must the college do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, (paragraphs 7f - 7k) the college should:

Establish and publish full procedures to meet the requirement; which

- where parents are not satisfied with the response to a complaint, provision is made for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;*
- ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one person will be independent of the management and running of the college;*
- allows for parents to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;*
- provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that the complainant, proprietors and principal, and where the relevant the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations;*
- provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing;*
- provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the 2002 Act requests access to them; and*
- where the school provides boarding accommodation, complies with Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.*

SCHOOL DETAILS



Name of school:	Stafford House College
DfES Number	886/6075
Type of school:	Tutorial College

Status:	Independent
Number on roll:	162
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Fees:	Day: £3850-£4600/term; Residential: £3850-£5100/term
Address of school:	68 New Dover Road Canterbury Kent CT1 3LQ
Email address:	enquiries@staffordhouse.com
Telephone number:	01-227-866540
Fax number:	01-227-866540
Headteacher:	Mr Daniel Radlett
Proprietor:	Cambridge Education Group
Reporting Inspector:	Mr M. D. Thirkell HMI
Date of Inspection:	3-6 November 2003

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Stafford College S163 Inspection Report