

Fine Arts College

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Sue Frater HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Fine Arts College Hampstead is an independent sixth form college in Belsize Park that, while specialising in the arts and humanities, provides a wide range of courses for students aged 15 to 19 years. The courses lead to GCSE, AS, A level and English Baccalaureate qualifications. In addition, students can take Pre-Foundation and short Portfolio courses in art and design. The college was founded in 1978 by the current joint principals with the aim of 'creating a college where the arts and humanities are given special attention... in a learning environment that acts as an effective bridge between school and university life'.

Of the 126 students currently on roll, 19 are of compulsory school age. Very few students speak English as an additional language and none are at an early stage of learning English. One student has a statement of special educational needs. Almost all students progress to university or art school. The college was last inspected in October 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Fine Arts College Hampstead provides an outstanding quality of education. The curriculum is outstanding in its breadth and flexibility to meet the aspirations of individual students. The outstanding quality of teaching promotes students' outstanding progress, particularly in the arts and humanities. Students' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures and the welfare, health and safety of students are also outstanding. The college meets its aims and all regulations, an improvement on the good standards noted in the last inspection.

Quality of education

The outstanding curriculum offers an extensive range of GCSE, AS and A level courses. It covers business studies, classical studies, drama and theatre studies, English literature, economics, film studies, fine art, geography, government and politics, graphic design, history, history of art, mathematics, media studies, modern languages, modern Hebrew, music, music technology, philosophy, photography,

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

psychology, religious studies, sociology and textiles. All students in the fifth form take the English Baccalaureate, unless specifically requested otherwise. The Baccalaureate provides a broad and balanced curriculum and a firm foundation in basic skills by covering English language, English literature, mathematics, history or geography, a science and a language. In addition, students are encouraged to take up to four other subjects from a wide offer encompassing the arts, humanities or additional languages and sciences. Most students choose the arts and humanities as this is their reason for selecting the Fine Arts College. Physical education is provided on one afternoon each week.

The curriculum is well tailored to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of individual students. Students may choose any subject offered and there is no restriction on subject combinations. Personal, social and health education suitably includes careers education. Well judged advice and every assistance are given to help students make an informed choice of subjects and appropriate university or art school places. Almost all students progress to university or art school. Schemes of work focus on examination specifications and provide clear progression. Lessons are planned to challenge the most able as well as to support students with special educational needs. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of visits and activities including international history of art trips, theatre trips, film society, book club, the summer exhibition, music recitals, college theatre productions, ice skating at Somerset House, an annual sponsored walk for charity, 5-a-side power league football and students' end of year party. The impact of the wider curriculum is that students are helped to become well-rounded individuals who are knowledgeable about a wide range of issues, and able to develop and pursue their interests to a high level.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall. It is consistently good and is exemplary in many subjects, particularly in the arts and humanities. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and expertise engage and inspire students. The following comment written by one student encapsulates the views of many, 'I find my lessons inspiring and I am developing new skills and techniques.' Lessons are planned well to ensure that no time is lost in leading students to achieve challenging learning objectives. Teachers model high expectations of skills. A variety of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic teaching and learning strategies, including PowerPoint presentations, film clips, discussion and role play, engages all students. Students appreciate the well prepared resources in all lessons and the outstanding arts facilities which enable them to work in any medium. They also value teachers' high expectations of them to work independently, as in researching, evaluating and refining their work. For example, a photography student researched the history of dance, dance photographers and artists such as Bruce Monk and Degas, and visited relevant photography exhibitions, in preparation for her practical work. The teacher's challenging questions helped her to evaluate and improve her skills in photographing movement.

Teachers make very good use of assessment to adapt lessons to the needs of all students. Regular and detailed verbal and written feedback for individual students in

all subjects enables them to know what to do to improve their work and to reach higher examination grades. Students make particularly rapid progress when teachers skilfully question individuals to extend their thinking and their responses. For example, in a history of art lesson, the teacher asked a series of probing questions to help a student realise that the Gothic period derived from theology. Students make connections between subjects. For example, in a fine art lesson, a student was encouraged to draw on her reading of Marlowe's 'Dr Faustus' in English literature for ideas for her composition on the theme of combinations and alliances.

Students' progress is outstanding overall. It is at least good in almost all subjects and exemplary in many, especially in the arts and humanities. Each student, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, progresses very well against the challenging targets set for them. Personal tutors monitor reports from subject tutors and discuss them with students each week in the case of GCSE students and every fortnight for A-level students. Tutorials are provided to enable students to keep up with the work. This is particularly effective in supporting students with special educational needs in their basic skills. Students play a dynamic role in their learning. They offer their ideas and respond to challenges with great enthusiasm. They demonstrate high levels of independence, creativity and concentration.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Students enjoy their lessons very much, as evident in their high attendance. Their attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive and they are self-motivated to use the facilities in their own time. Students say that the college helps them to mature and this is demonstrated in the way that they readily accept responsibility for their own conduct and learning. Students have high aspirations and develop very effective independent learning skills to support them in their higher education and future careers.

Across the curriculum, students are given many opportunities to reflect on ultimate questions, for instance in studying poetry that questions the purpose of existence. They are encouraged to develop their own views and ideas and to grow in self-knowledge. They learn to value creativity and the natural world, as evident in their sketchbooks which demonstrate high standards of close observation. Talks given by outside experts, for instance on law and order, and discussions in humanities about how people treat others, help the students to develop a strong sense of morality and principles to live by. They make a positive contribution to lessons and to the community, for example in engaging regularly in fundraising for charity. In their positive and encouraging interactions with staff and with each other, and in excelling in their chosen subjects, students grow in confidence and self-esteem. They demonstrate well developed social skills.

The college provides most students with extensive opportunities to develop their cultural awareness, for example through visits to the theatre, national art galleries

and to key architectural sites and art galleries in Europe. However, there are fewer opportunities for students of compulsory school age on the GCSE courses to develop an appreciation and understanding of a wider range of cultural traditions.

Students' outstanding behaviour and attitudes are key factors in their successful learning. Students respond exceptionally well to the respect they are shown at the college and in turn they are highly considerate and very supportive of each other. They form strong friendships. Their consistently thoughtful behaviour contributes to an extremely positive learning ethos.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding. Students are well known and exceptionally well cared for. All the required policies and procedures for safeguarding young people are robust and are implemented rigorously and monitored regularly. They include those relating to child protection and safer recruitment, fire, first aid and health and safety. Staff training in these areas is up to date and therefore regulations not met at the time of the last inspection are now met. The procedures are well understood by all staff who give the highest priority to safeguarding all students. The parents and carers who completed the questionnaire have confidence in the college's procedures for welfare, health and safety.

The college is an inclusive community in which all students are valued. Students say they feel very safe in the college and that incidents of bullying are rare. They are confident to talk to any member of staff, and particularly their personal tutors, if they have any concerns. The college promotes safe and healthy lifestyles through the curriculum and especially in lessons on personal, social and health education. Attendance registers are completed carefully and any absence followed up immediately. The college fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010 in its provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with young people, including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau and other safer recruitment checks, have been carried out and recorded appropriately in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The main college buildings are situated around an attractive gated courtyard for the exclusive use of the college. They include specialist facilities for fine art, textiles, graphics, music technology and drama. Additional specialist facilities are provided a short distance away for photography and media studies. All the accommodation is well maintained.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided or made available on the college website to parents, carers and others. Progress reports are provided each term. Of the few completed parental questionnaires, the majority are fully positive. The following comment from a parent sums up the several positive written comments provided. 'This is a superb school for children with a creative or artistic talent. The school nurtures their talent and encourages them to excel. My child has never been happier than at this school.'

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The policy and procedures for handling complaints meet the regulations. No formal complaints were received in the previous academic year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- increase the opportunities for students of compulsory school age to develop a wider understanding and appreciation of other cultural traditions.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Sixth form college		
Date school opened	1978		
Age range of pupils	15–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 45	Girls: 81	Total: 126
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,200–£16,950		
Address of school	24 Lambolle Place Belsize Park London NW3 4PG		
Telephone number	0207 586 0312		
Email address	mail@hampsteadfinearts.com		
Principals	Mr N Cochrane and Ms C Cave		
Proprietors	Mr N Cochrane and Ms C Cave		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Fine Arts College Hampstead, London NW3 4PG

Thank you for contributing to the inspection of your college. It was a pleasure to see you at work in lessons and to talk with many of you. The following is what I found.

Your college provides you with an outstanding education. The range of GCSE, AS, A level and baccalaureate subject options is extensive and tailored to meet your individual aspirations. You told me that the teaching is excellent and that the teachers really do care about you. I agree. I saw that your teachers are inspiring and that they enable you to make exceptionally good progress. Examination results at the college are high, particularly in the arts and humanities.

You say the college helps you to mature and to be independent in your learning. I found that these special features of the college prepare you well for university or art school. Your personal development and your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. While you enjoy a broad range of cultural opportunities, particularly visits to art galleries, theatres and international visits, those of you taking GCSEs have fewer opportunities to develop your appreciation and understanding of a wider range of cultural traditions. I have asked the Principals to consider how they could develop this.

Your behaviour is excellent. You told me that bullying is rare and that you feel very safe in the college. I found that the college makes outstanding provision for your welfare, health and safety.

I wish you success in your examinations and in your university or art school courses.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector