



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER  
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

**CITY COLLEGE NOTTINGHAM**

**(Company registration Number - 02783889)**

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Principal	Mr Hassan Ahmed
Proprietor	City College Nottingham (Registered Charity)
Age Range	16+
Total number of students	300
Numbers by age and type of study	16: <b>14</b>
	17: <b>10</b>
	18+: <b>276</b>
	EFL only: <b>58</b>
	FE only: <b>242</b>
Inspection dates	<b>24 to 26 May 2016</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language schools. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the institution's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through Tier 4 of the points-based system for student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college 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 students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

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## 1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 City College Nottingham is an independent non-profit making further and higher education college. It operates over two sites, both just outside the centre of the city, as well as in community venues. The college was registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee in 1993. It is led by the principal, who reports to the seven directors on the board of trustees. The college's mission is to raise the aspirations and skills of individuals in order to improve their employment and career prospects and support economic and social inclusion. It aims to provide quality vocational training geared to enable individuals to achieve nationally recognised qualifications and increase their employment opportunities. It has a series of partnership arrangements with local authorities and further education colleges.
- 1.2 The college offers a variety of programmes largely aimed at members of the local community. Courses include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), functional skills, Access to Higher Education, apprenticeships and a range of vocational courses at various levels.
- 1.3 There were 300 students enrolled at the time of the inspection, of whom 24 were under 18 years of age. There are equal numbers of male and female students and the vast majority come from the United Kingdom or the European Union. No students are studying on Tier 4 visas. The 16-18 year olds were all on construction or computer courses, together with functional skills. English is a second language for just over a third of students, the majority of whom spoke Eastern European languages or Urdu. Just over ten percent of students have declared special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Enrolment takes place predominantly in September and January each year.
- 1.4 The college was last inspected on 28 April 2015 when it met all key standards and the quality of education was judged to meet expectations.

## 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. The college has very clear educational aims and objectives which result in excellent learning experiences for students. Initial assessment is good and ensures that students are placed on appropriate courses which meet their needs. Initial interviews effectively identify individual support needs. Procedures for sharing this information and recording support are not fully developed. High quality information, advice and guidance enable students to make informed choices for future progression. Teaching, learning and assessment are excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and lessons are thoroughly planned. Very effective teaching methods and learning activities challenge learners and support independent learning skills. Marking and assessment are timely and well monitored. High quality resources are used very effectively and the use of technology enhances students' learning and motivation. Individual learning plans (ILPs) show evidence of excellent progress and achievement. Targets are not always negotiated or sufficiently specific or measurable. Students receive good individual support but most staff lack the expertise to support students with specific learning difficulties. Attainment and progress are excellent. Qualification success rates are high and the majority of results are excellent. The large majority of students successfully progress to employment, or higher level learning.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Highly effective and well monitored arrangements ensure the safety of students and staff. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Staff and students receive high quality training on health and safety. College buildings are fit for purpose and well maintained. Access and emergency arrangements are very good, including for those with special needs. Security provision is effective in securing students' safety. Admission and attendance records are thorough and accurate. The college has effective procedures to monitor attendance. Pastoral support is excellent. Relationships within the college are very positive. The college positively promotes integration and tolerance and induction is thorough. Consequently students settle quickly into their learning programmes. An informal social programme enhances students' learning experience. Excellent careers advice and guidance enable students to make informed choices about their next steps. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Extremely comprehensive safeguarding procedures are well implemented by staff and students. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) suitability checks are carried out and an accurate central register is maintained.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. Leaders and managers are very effective in providing clear direction in line with the college's aims and ethos. Oversight is highly effective and trustees fulfil their obligations very well. Financial investment is well targeted to support students. Excellent progress

has been made in investing in technology to support teaching and learning and data analysis and reporting. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and reviewed for effectiveness and there is a strong emphasis on serving the community and continuous quality improvement. The college is successful in recruiting and developing high quality staff, committed to student development and progression. As a result students are well educated and achievement is excellent. Continuous professional development programmes are successful in updating staff skills and knowledge. Quality assurance arrangements are very effective. Self-evaluation is accurate and is effective in setting priorities and securing improvements. Students views are sought and effective actions are taken to deal with issues and feedback to students. Lesson observations and appraisals inform training needs and result in areas for development, although targets are not always sufficiently specific. Staff recruitment is excellent. The college responded efficiently to all requests for information. The website provides accurate information which is helpful to students.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival**

3.1 The assessment of students prior to and on arrival is good. Very clear information, advice and guidance are provided and initial and diagnostic assessment is accurate and used very well to place students on appropriate courses which enable all students to learn and make progress. Initial interviews are very effective in identifying barriers to learning and the type of support learners require to progress on their chosen programme of study, the procedures for sharing this information to inform ILPs and cross-college teams are not fully developed.

#### **3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum**

3.2 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. Courses are very well matched to the needs of the local community and students are well educated in accordance with their objectives and the aims and ethos of the college. Accurate curriculum information is provided in the college's marketing materials and courses offered enable progression to employment or higher level learning. High quality information and guidance enables students to make informed choices for future progression. As a result most students make at least good progress and complete the course for which they are registered. All courses are accredited and externally validated by national awarding organisations which meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in the Home Office guidance.

#### **3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning**

3.3 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is excellent. Lessons are very well planned and teachers use effective teaching methods and learning activities to challenge learners, develop confidence and support independent learning skills. The majority of teaching is excellent. Teachers understand their students' needs very well and plan activities which engage and stimulate learners. This results in high levels of enjoyment and keen application to their learning tasks. As a result students make good progress.

3.4 High quality resources are utilised very effectively in classes and workshops and the use of technology enhances students' learning and motivation. Excellent progress has been made on the recommendation to invest in technology and ensure its effective use in teaching and learning. Inspectors observed very good use of learning software in lessons and students use an intranet learning platform which enables them to access learning resources or catch up on missed sessions. Teaching staff have excellent subject knowledge in their vocational areas and use their experience to very good effect in practical sessions. In a very small minority of theory sessions, lack of active learning methods together with ineffective questioning limit student participation. Marking and assessment are timely and well monitored.

However, feedback to support the development of standard English skills, particularly spelling, punctuation and grammar is inconsistent.

- 3.5 There are excellent examples of vocational learning in simulated work situations which develop students' skills and understanding very effectively. Students are enthusiastic about the skills they are developing. Teachers set challenging tasks based on the outcomes of continuous and effective assessment. Individual learning plans identify personal and curriculum targets and there is clear evidence of excellent progress and achievement. Targets are not always sufficiently specific or measurable and do not show evidence of negotiation with the student.
- 3.6 Students with learning, language or functional skills needs are supported well. Support assistants with subject expertise operate in vocational areas. Excellent functional skills and ESOL classes, and drop in sessions, enable learners to improve their skills. In most cases this is very successful in supporting students' learning needs and enabling them to develop understanding and skills. The lack of formal co-ordination between staff with different responsibilities, such as teachers and support assistants, or functional skills and vocational teachers, sometimes diminishes effectiveness. Support needs are not systematically identified on ILPs or included in lesson plans. Very few staff have expertise in how to support learners with specific learning difficulties.
- 3.7 Within vocational classes, peer support is used very effectively where level 3 learners help those at level 1 and more mature learners support 16-18 year olds. This is often very effective in encouraging younger students to act more appropriately, although at times it also causes frustration for more mature students. The college is extremely successful in attracting students who have been excluded or unsuccessful in other educational environments, and enabling them to make progress and achieve their learning aims.

### **3.(d) Attainment and progress**

- 3.8 Attainment and progress are excellent. Students have tracking sheets that show they are making very good progress against their starting points and the assessment criteria required for the attainment of their qualification. Qualification success rates in the majority of courses have risen. The majority of results are excellent. Reasons for leaving courses are meticulously recorded and show that most students who leave a course early do so for employment, family or financial reasons. The large majority of students progress successfully to employment, further or higher level learning

## **4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises**

- 4.1 The management of health and safety is excellent. The college places a high priority on health and safety. Highly effective and well monitored arrangements are in place to ensure the safety of students and staff. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Fire prevention systems and first aid arrangements are systematic and very well managed. The college has an appropriate number of fire marshals and staff trained in first aid. There are comprehensive records of accidents and incidents together with resulting actions for improvement. Signage is clear and first aid and fire safety information is displayed in prominent positions around the college. As a result the college is a safe place for students to study.
- 4.2 Staff and students receive high quality information and training on health and safety, safeguarding and protection from radicalisation and extremism. Students' safe working practices are good and they are involved in discussing safety and welfare issues. They know who to contact to access help and support.
- 4.3 Ramps and lifts enable excellent access to the college for disabled students and arrangements are in place to ensure safe evacuation of the building. Washrooms, including those for students with disabilities, are available in all areas including the workshops away from the main building. The college buildings are fit for purpose, safe, clean, well maintained and provide a positive learning environment. Security arrangements include close circuit cameras and are effective in securing the safety of students.

### **4.(b) Student registration and attendance records**

- 4.4 Systems for recording registration and attendance are excellent. Admission and attendance registers are thorough and accurate. Well implemented lateness and absence policies are shared with students at induction and student absences are followed up immediately. Actions taken are very effective and include phone calls, letters and even home visits. There are fair and clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees.
- 4.5 Appropriate systems are in place to make the necessary reports to the Home Office and are fully understood by staff. No students with Tier 4 visas are currently enrolled.

### **4.(c) Pastoral support for students**

- 4.6 Pastoral and personal support is excellent. There is an excellent range of well implemented policies and procedures that underpin the care and welfare of the students. The welfare officer is well supported by the staff team and external agencies to provide a range of personal support, guidance and careers advice for students, in line with the aims of the college. Students know who to go to if they

need help. Relationships among students, and between staff and students, are excellent. Induction is robust and comprehensive and the college positively promotes integration and tolerance. Consequently students settle quickly into their learning programmes.

- 4.7 An informal social programme provides good opportunities for students to access a range of community and sporting activities which enhance their learning experience. Information, advice and guidance are well organised and enable students to make informed choices regarding progression to higher level learning or employment. Students' responses to pre-inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive and confirm that the vast majority of students are highly satisfied and would recommend the college. All students interviewed during the inspection felt they were making good progress and confirmed that there are positive relationships throughout the college. Inspectors' findings support this view.

#### **4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s (if applicable)**

- 4.8 Safeguarding arrangements for students under 18 are excellent. The college has extremely comprehensive and well-publicised safeguarding procedures which are understood and implemented by staff and students. The designated safeguarding team are appropriately trained. The team is introduced to the students in induction and publicised on the website. All staff have undergone training on safeguarding and protecting students from radicalisation and extremism, provided in partnership with external bodies. Board members and senior managers regularly monitor the implementation of the strategy. DBS suitability checks are carried out on all staff prior to taking up their positions and an accurate central register is maintained. Staff understand their responsibilities very well and the college is pro-active in managing risk.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) Ownership and oversight**

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight are excellent. Relationships between the board and senior managers are strong and effective. Trustees have an excellent insight into the working of the college, fulfil their obligations well, and oversee the work of the college very successfully on a voluntary basis. They are very committed to the college's ethos of targeting the socially deprived, fully involved in the strategic vision, and contribute expertise, advice and scrutiny. Board meetings demonstrate a comprehensive overview of the activities of the college with excellent attention to detail resulting in very effective oversight. As a result the college has all appropriate legal permissions, welfare, health and safety are excellent, and safeguarding is highly effective, including for students under 18.
- 5.2 Financial investment is well targeted on staff, essential maintenance of the building and learning resources. Students are benefiting from the college's investment in technology to support teaching and learning, and industry standard equipment in vocational areas. Investment in a new management information system has improved data analysis and reporting.

### **5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities**

- 5.3 Leadership and management are excellent. Leaders and managers are very effective in providing extremely clear strategic direction. They are very successful in fulfilling their aims of serving the community, ensuring student welfare, promoting continuous quality improvement and widening the range and levels of courses. Roles and responsibilities are clear and managers ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place and reviewed for effectiveness. Safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are very high priorities and are monitored well by senior managers. Students confirmed to inspectors that they feel safe and supported.
- 5.4 The college is successful in recruiting and developing high quality staff who are committed to student development and progression. Continuous professional development programmes are successful in updating staff skills and knowledge and have included training on safeguarding, protecting students against radicalisation, health and safety, and how to challenge learners.

### **5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback**

Quality assurance arrangements are excellent. Achievement, retention and attendance data are analysed effectively and staff take all possible steps to support students to achieve, including making home visits when they feel it is necessary. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on data analysis and student and staff views. Management at all levels is successful in involving staff, through team meetings, in identifying priorities for improvement, planning to meet those priorities and

effectively implementing decisions. Each programme team focuses on its own area. This is effective and managers monitor progress against targets well. Opportunities are missed to fully involve all staff by officially communicating the self-evaluation results across the organisation and formally involving them in evaluating progress on the quality improvement plan. External verification reports confirm that assessment and verification procedures are robust and accurate and success rates are high.

- 5.5 Students' views are sought informally and through regular surveys and focus groups. Effective action is taken to deal with any concerns and clear feedback is given to students on the college's response. Feedback from staff occurs on a more informal basis. Reports on student achievement data inform team meetings to enable them to evaluate student progress and target improvement effectively.
- 5.6 Lesson observations are carried out on a regular basis, often in conjunction with partner organisations. They are linked to annual appraisals and inform training needs. Areas for development are recorded but this does not always result in specific and measurable action points which are monitored and evaluated to increase expertise. Students report that they feel safe and are very satisfied with their learning and experience at the college.
- 5.7 The college provides a fair fee protection scheme, which is on the website.

#### **5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks**

- 5.8 Staff recruitment is excellent. There are thorough procedures in place for checking the suitability and qualifications of all staff, including confirmation of their identity and right to work in the UK. There is a single central register and all staff have an enhanced DBS suitability check.

#### **5.(e) Provision of information**

- 5.9 The provision of information is excellent. The college responded quickly and efficiently to all requests for information by inspectors. The website provides comprehensive and accurate information which is helpful to students.

## **6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

In order to further improve the excellent quality provided, the college should:

- use assessment and interview records to provide information which leads to negotiated, measurable targets on individual learning plans
- improve support for individual learning needs by working more closely together across programme areas and sharing information
- increase teacher expertise in supporting learners with specific learning difficulties

**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 board of trustees, and attended registration sessions. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

**Inspectors**

Mrs Pauline Bateman	Lead Inspector
Mrs Linda Ross	Team Inspector
Mr Simon Bellamy	Team Inspector