

Earlscliffe (Sussex Summer Schools Ltd)

29 Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone, CT20 2NB

Inspection dates	12–14 June 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Students make good progress in developing their English language skills and preparing for university entrance.
- Students are keen to learn, behave exceptionally well and work hard.
- The school provides a safe and stimulating learning environment where students make the most of their individual capabilities.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge and expert language-teaching skills to enthuse students and to challenge them well.
- The Director and senior leaders have a clear ambition for the school and set high standards. This contributes to good teaching and students making good progress. They are aware of what the school needs to do to improve, and have effective strategies to enable it to do so.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Not enough teaching is at the highest level to ensure that students achieve exceptionally well.
- There is room for improvement in the evaluation of educational trips undertaken to ensure they provide an even better experience for the students.
- The management of staff performance does not make the best use of the outcomes of lesson observations to improve the quality of teaching.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed 10 lessons taught by most of the school's teachers. He spoke to students and looked at their work. He held meetings with the school's Director, who is also the proprietor, and with senior leaders.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation, including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, monitoring reports of teaching and learning, and staff training records.
- The following additional information was taken into account: 16 responses from parents and carers to the online Ofsted questionnaire; the school's evaluation of its own survey of the opinions of all the students; 16 staff members' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire; and a collection of emails from parents and carers, guardians and agents.

Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Earlscliffe opened in September 2012 in newly refurbished accommodation. It is a co-educational, independent international school offering residential and educational facilities for up to 60 students. It is owned and operated by Sussex Summer Schools Ltd and situated close to the centre of Folkestone.
- The school offers a range of courses aimed at enabling young people, predominantly from overseas, to gain access to top-ranked British or overseas universities.
- There are currently 30 male and female students on the school's roll, aged between 14 and 19 years. Almost all are boarders and most are taking courses of one or two years' duration.
- The school aims 'to provide an arena of academic stimulus, intelligence rigour, cultural enrichment, vigorous internationalism and ultimately, personal success, in which students perform to their very best abilities'.
- A small number of students have special educational needs, none is disabled and none has a statement of special educational needs.
- The college does not make use of alternative off-site provision.
- This is the first full inspection of the college and only refers to the school's educational provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school should ensure that all teachers:
 - provide a consistently high level of challenge to all individual students
 - extend the range of teaching strategies used in lessons
 - plan lessons where the content and activities are well matched to students' level of ability
 - ensure students always know what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders and managers should:
 - ensure that the outcomes of lesson observations are used to ensure that all teaching is raised to the standard of the best
 - ensure that the value of educational trips is regularly evaluated to make sure they provide the best possible experience for students.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students achieve well and make good progress because of good teaching. The wide range of courses and effective actions by the teachers enable the great majority to make regular and consistent improvement in all subjects. Observation of lessons and of students' work during the inspection showed the students to be making good progress overall. They are committed and thoughtful learners who work hard and are keen to do well. Where the teaching is best some students make outstanding progress. Students with special educational needs are effectively supported and achieve well.

Students begin their courses with various levels of ability in using the English language. All make good progress in their understanding and use of written and spoken English as they work towards the relevant International English Language Testing System (IELTS) qualifications and use English in almost all of their subject lessons. Students' understanding of English is also supported by studying for A-level in their mother tongue, where they make very good progress. All students on the GCSE level International Transition Year courses and many A-level students study mathematics and achieve well. The AS level Extended Project Qualification is well used by individual students to develop very good capacity for self-directed study.

As the school has only been open since September 2012, results from public examinations are not yet available. However, students take weekly tests in all subjects as part of the school's rigorous progress tracking procedures and results indicate good progress overall as well as pointing out specific areas for improvement. These results also show that students sustain their progress over time. Grades predicated on the basis of this data suggest that most students are on course to achieve their aim of gaining a place at one of the United Kingdom's top-ranked universities or their international equivalents.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Students' behaviour is outstanding. They are consistently thoughtful, courteous and polite. Discussions with staff members and evidence from others involved with the school indicate that they regularly behave extremely well over time.

Students' attendance is very high. They are punctual to their lessons and are always well prepared with the required equipment and homework tasks are completed on time. They provide one another with a valuable and constructive learning environment. Students say that they very much enjoy the school and their lessons and activities. They report that they do not experience any bullying, but that they are aware of how to respond to it if they did.

The provision the school makes for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students make very good use of a wide range of excellent opportunities to grow as individuals and to develop their self-confidence. They contribute to the local community both by raising funds and by practical work. For example, the charity committee is planning an event to raise awareness about and funds for endangered species, some students visit a home for the elderly and are painting a mural to enhance their environment while others are working on the gardens in a centre for terminally ill children. A wide range of visiting speakers, including local business people and the town's Member of Parliament as well as a survivor of the Holocaust, inspires students with new ways of seeing the world and challenges them to reconsider their assumptions. Discussions with police, debates about topical subjects and visits to Parliament all help the students gain an understanding of English institutions and services. The students also take part in valuable activities associated with the school's status as a United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) school. Some have broadened their international

awareness by visiting the United Nations in New York and all benefit from taking part in workshops to learn about issues such as poverty, illiteracy and conflict and consider actions that they can take both as individual and as members of the school community.

The students and staff make up a vibrant and culturally mixed community. Through their studies and interactions with each other, they gain a good understanding of different cultures and beliefs and this is reflected in the respect that pervades college life. The school is vigilant in ensuring that balanced views are expressed both in politics lessons and in the many other situations where political issues are discussed.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and makes a positive contribution to the good progress made by students. Teachers know students well and the effective relationships in the classrooms promote learning well. Teaching is not outstanding overall because not enough teachers provide a consistently high level of challenge to individual students and the range of teaching strategies used is too limited in some lessons.

Much good teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge and language-teaching ability with lessons that are planned with a range of learning activities that motivate students. Most teachers are aware of students' different levels of ability and use their knowledge to ensure that individuals achieve good results. Where students have additional difficulties, for instance those who have been assessed as having dyslexia, teachers make suitable adaptations; these include providing additional time for students to complete tasks.

In a small number of lessons the content and activities are not well matched to students' ability, teachers place too much emphasis on direct instruction and students are unsure of what they need to do to improve. However, in outstanding lessons such as were seen in biology and in politics, careful questioning constantly challenges students to test and extend their knowledge and to learn from the reflections of others in the class. Students in these lessons are able to make very good use of a variety of activities and sources of information ranging from well-chosen textbooks to observation of marine fauna on a beach close to the school.

Students' abilities in their chosen subjects and in their use of English language are assessed at the beginning of their course and in the weekly tests. Test results and subject teachers' comments supplement the regular and effective marking of students' work which usually but not always provides valuable guidance for students. This helps them to develop strategies for improving their knowledge and understanding. In some instances students benefit from additional coaching in areas identified in the tests they have completed.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good and offers an appropriate range of courses that enable students to extend their proficiency in written and spoken English and also to gain the academic qualifications they need to achieve their stated aims of gaining a place at a university of their choice. The curriculum, which contributes well towards the students' good progress, is not outstanding because students are not making outstanding progress and achieving very highly.

There are a good number of courses on offer. The International Transition Year (ITY) provides a very effective GCSE level pathway towards university entrance for students who have not yet finished high school education in their home country. The content of the ITY ensures that all students of compulsory school age have access to all the required areas of learning. The one-year University Foundation courses are based on the A-level syllabuses and are designed for students who already have A-level equivalent qualifications but need to ensure these meet British university entrance requirements. The majority of students are taking two-year A-level courses chosen from

the wide range on offer, which includes English literature, mathematics, the sciences, psychology, economics, history and politics. The AS level Extended Project Qualification provides excellent opportunities for self-directed study on an issue of personal interest to the students. In addition, the international students benefit from the valuable opportunity to take A levels in their mother tongue.

Detailed planning, covering the long, medium and short term, supports the curriculum well. This ensures that students progressively build up their knowledge and skills over time. Excellent provision is also made for students' personal, social and health education so that they develop personal and social attributes to add to their continually developing academic skills.

The college provides an exceptional range of extra-curricular sporting and academic activities that add to students' enjoyment of college life. Although the college does not have its own sporting facilities students make very good use of membership of a local sports centre with its gym, swimming pools and football pitches. They frequently supplement their timetabled sessions with visits during the week. Many students extend their thinking and presentation skills by taking part in inter-school debating competitions. They also take advantage of efficient train links to make theatre and museum visits to London and to the continent, where a group recently visited Bruges. Links with schools in other parts of the world are used to arrange educational trips further afield including a recent trip to Turkey.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Good provision is made for the welfare, health and safety of students, and all the independent school regulations for this standard are met. Students report that they feel safe and well cared for, and that this enables them to learn and make progress. They appreciate the respectful relationships they enjoy with teachers, and they benefit from the close bonds they form with one another. Policies for managing students' behaviour are clear and implemented well, and appropriate procedures to eliminate bullying are in place. Students and staff members say that there is no bullying. Students understand the college's policies and code of conduct.

The provision for the students' welfare, health and safety is not outstanding because some of the school's policies are not yet implemented as effectively as they could be. In particular, although detailed risk assessments are carried out which meet requirements and ensure that educational visits and activities do not endanger students, the Director is aware of the need to undertake a fuller audit to ensure that the arrangements for planning each trip are fully evaluated so students gain the most they can from them. All other aspects of the health and safety policy are carefully implemented and effective risk assessments are carried out to ensure the safety of all the facilities where students work. All necessary procedures to ensure fire safety are carried out and an appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid.

All staff are trained in child protection. The designated officer for safeguarding, including child protection, has received the required advanced level of training, and all other senior staff members are trained to this level and can deputise in this role. Effective procedures ensure the safe recruitment of staff, and the checks made to ensure suitability are recorded as required on a single central register. Students are appropriately supervised and effective security arrangements are in place at the school.

Individual students' attendance is recorded accurately and an admissions register is maintained as required.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school are good and have a good impact in ensuring

students achieve well. The rapid development of the excellent facilities and of student numbers has been possible because the whole staff team shares the high expectations of the Director/proprietor.

The proprietor has ensured that all of the independent school regulations are met. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school's leaders know what is needed to continue to increase the quality of the provision. Leadership and management are not outstanding because students' progress is only good. In addition, some of the school's arrangements to ensure improvement in students' outcomes are not yet used as well as they could be. For example, although lesson observations take place for all teachers and helpful suggestions for improvement are made, a formal process of appraisal that carefully checks the way staff respond, and that enables and tracks their improvement, is not yet as effective as it could be.

The proprietor has provided excellent premises and facilities to help the students achieve their goals. Classrooms are well maintained and of a good size. Specialist teaching areas include a well-equipped science laboratory. Very good arrangements for information and communication technology are available throughout the school.

All the required information for parents, carers and others is provided or made available through the school brochure and information packs or on the proprietor's very informative website. Parents and carers, their agents and guardians' are unanimous in their positive views about the school and the way it enables students to make good progress in their learning and their personal development. The college's complaints procedure meets requirements and is implemented well with information about making complaints readily available to students and to parents and carers and their agents.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138405
Inspection number	420252
DfE registration number	886/6138

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	International school
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	14 – 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sussex Summer Schools Ltd
Chair	Tim Fish
Headteacher	Tim Fish
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Annual fees (boarding)	£26,850
Telephone number	01303 253951
Email address	enquiries@earlscliffe.co.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

