

Bales College

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield 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

Bales College was first registered as a school in 1989 by the present proprietor and was formerly known as the Modern Tutorial College founded in 1966. It is based on a single site near Kensal Green in north-west London. The school is registered to provide for students between 11 and 18 years of age, there are 69 students on roll, five of whom are boarders. The educational provision was last inspected in 2007 and the boarding and welfare provision in 2008. The school's boarding provision was not inspected during this visit. The motto of the college is 'perseverance' and it aims to '*enable all to achieve their potential*'.

The college enrolls students with a range of academic achievements from a number of different countries. A small minority of students speak English as an additional language. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. A high proportion of students, studying for A-level qualifications, have joined the college from other schools to retake their examinations and are seeking to improve on their previous results.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of the education is satisfactory. The majority of students make satisfactory progress from their starting points on entry. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, as is their behaviour. The attention given to the students' welfare is inadequate; safeguarding procedures have not been updated in line with current guidance and health and safety arrangements are inadequate. The college does not meet all of the statutory requirements for registration as an independent school. The majority of these regulatory failures were reported on at the time of the last inspection and the school has made limited progress since then in meeting them.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The college's curriculum is satisfactory. A suitable range of subjects are provided to students to help them to learn and develop. Planning is based on the National Curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9, the International GCSE for students in Years 10 and 11 and recognised examination board syllabi for older students. Students studying at A level are able to select from a broad range of subjects. The curriculum for younger pupils has been revised in time for the start of this academic year. These alterations are aimed at making the curriculum more relevant for pupils, with plans for increased opportunities for trips and visits. In the majority of cases teachers are responsible for teaching a single subject across all age ranges and they prepare schemes of work which describe the individual topics, resources and the expected learning. Consequently, in these subjects staff are able to ensure that students build on previous learning from year to year and make satisfactory progress overall during their time at the college.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Teaching is characterised by good relationships with students resulting in positive attitudes in the majority of lessons. Specialist teachers are well qualified and their enthusiasm and subject knowledge are successfully transmitted to pupils. The pace of learning in lessons increases where teachers deal individually with misconceptions and provide explanations. In these lessons, students' more rapid acquisition of knowledge and skills ensures that progress is good. In a number of lessons, teachers spend too much time in providing explanations and students are given limited opportunities to work independently or to apply their learning. Lessons are rarely tailored appropriately to meet the differing abilities within the class. The small minority of students who speak English as an additional language do not receive appropriate support in lessons to enable them to learn and make progress.

The marking of students' written work is limited in quality. Assessment procedures are satisfactory because teachers develop a sound understanding of students' abilities and use regular tests and formal assessments to monitor their progress. Resources are sufficient for the subject content involved, although students studying information and communication technology have difficulties in accessing computers and the internet. Students do not receive sufficient careers advice and guidance or support in choosing which subjects to study at GCSE and A level.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students report that they enjoy attending school and appreciate the close-knit school community. Students from a wide range of backgrounds and countries learn together. They show respect for each other and develop a satisfactory understanding of the beliefs and cultures of their peers. Their behaviour around school is satisfactory overall. Students accept responsibility for themselves and show consideration for others. Their attendance is satisfactory overall. Staff have taken

effective action to improve the punctuality of younger students, although this procedure is not consistently applied to older students.

Staff provide good role models and especially for those students who are re-sitting external examinations. The personal attention they receive helps raise students' self-esteem and their levels of achievement satisfactorily prepares them for their future lives. Older students appreciate the opportunity to speak with staff during dedicated study sessions or on an ad hoc basis. Younger students have recently been provided with a structured personal, social and health curriculum with appropriate coverage to develop all areas. An increasing range of visitors provide students with a satisfactory understanding of the local community and of public bodies and institutions. Pupils spoke enthusiastically of their recent visit to Paris and further residential trips to rural locations are planned. Students have limited opportunities to express their views and opinions outside of the classroom and to contribute to the life of the college.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is inadequate. Staff show care and concern for students in the day-to-day life of the college. During lessons, teachers build good relationships which help to promote students' enjoyment of school. The college has prepared a plan that meets the requirements of the Disability, Discrimination Act. Staff deal swiftly with any rare instances of bullying so that pupils report that intimidation is not part of their school experience. A clear behaviour policy defines rewards and sanctions, and pupils report that it has had a positive impact, not least in encouraging their punctuality.

There are, however, significant shortcomings in the provision for students' health and safety. The college's security arrangements are inadequate. The quality of the fire safety equipment is not monitored effectively and faults identified at the time of the last inspection have not been attended to. Portable electrical appliances have not been tested regularly. While the college reports that students have few accidents, no members of staff currently have undertaken the required first aid training. The staff have completed the appropriate child protection training and are more aware of the procedures required to record concerns. However, the school's safeguarding policy has not been updated and does not identify the designated person responsible for safeguarding students.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The college has completed a range of checks during the staff appointments process on applicants' employment history and qualifications, and maintains a single central register of the checks undertaken. However, it does not undertake checks on their medical fitness. It has completed the required checks on staff's suitability to work with children and, where appropriate, their right to work in the United Kingdom.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The premises are generally kept clean and tidy, and classrooms are suitable for the intended subjects taught. Classrooms are occasionally brightened by framed displays of high-quality artwork. The college periodically redecorates classrooms on a rolling programme; in the central classrooms, the décor and interiors are bright and rooms are well heated. In other classrooms, the interiors are less conducive to learning. In some areas of the school, the flooring is in an unsatisfactory condition; it is worn and there are splits in the carpet in the main dining area. Washrooms are not clearly distinguished for separate use by staff and students, nor are there separate facilities for girls and boys in the classroom blocks. The college does not currently provide suitable facilities for pupils who are ill. The local authority has recently made recommendations to the college to make improvements to the kitchen area but these have yet to be carried out.

Provision of information

College staff have produced and sent out separate handbooks to the parents and carers of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and those studying A levels. These provide information on college rules, the behaviour policy, uniform and an overview of the curriculum. Parents receive written reports at the end of the autumn term and the end of the school year and carers are. The college has not sent copies of its safeguarding policy to parents and carers, and prospective parents and carers on request. Parents and carers, prospective parents and others are not made aware of the availability of its particulars on admissions discipline and exclusions, the educational and welfare provision for students who speak English as an additional language or details of students' previous academic performance.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedure meets all of the requirements in terms of the required content. However, it is not currently made available for parents, carers and others. The proprietor reports that the college has received one formal complaint 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'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- provide appropriate careers guidance for students (paragraph 2 (2)(g))
- provide appropriate support for students who speak English as an additional language to enable them to learn and make progress (paragraph 2 (2)(i)).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure the safeguarding policy has regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State and is reviewed annually and contains details of designated person for child protection (paragraph 7)
- ensure there are effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety by making improvements to the buildings and grounds having regard to DfES guidance *Health and safety: responsibilities and powers* (DfES 0803/2001) (paragraph 11)
- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by improving fire safety procedures, ensuring fire alarms and extinguishers are checked and provide a safe access and exit from all areas in an emergency (paragraph 13)
- ensure the first aid policy is implemented and that appointed staff attend first aid training (paragraph 14)

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- prior to the appointment of staff, complete the appropriate checks to confirm each member of staff's medical fitness (paragraphs 19(2)(b) and 19(3))

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- improve the security arrangements of the grounds and buildings (paragraph 23(d))
- provide and clearly label the separate washroom facilities for staff and boys and girls (paragraph 23(j))
- ensure there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 23(k))
- improve the condition of flooring in the main dining area (paragraph 23(r)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- make available to parents and carers of pupils and of prospective pupils and on request to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, particulars of: the educational and welfare provision for students who speak English as an additional language; the policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions; and students' academic performance during the previous school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 24(1)(b))
- publish on the college's website or send to parents and carers of pupils and of prospective pupils on request a copy of the safeguarding policy (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- make available to parents and carers the complaints procedure (paragraph 25(b)).

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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The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision				
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Secondary day and boarding		
Date school opened	1989		
Age range of pupils	11–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 43	Girls: 26	Total: 69
Number of boarders	Boys: 2	Girls: 3	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,950		
Annual fees (boarders)	£5,350		
Address of school	742 Harrow Road, London W10 4AA		
Telephone number	0208 960 5899		
Email address	info@balescollege.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr William Moore		
Proprietor	Mr William Moore		