

# **Bales College**

742 Harrow Road, London, W10 4AA

#### **Inspection dates** 8-10 October 2013 **Overall effectiveness Inadequate** 4 Pupils' achievement Inadequate 4 Pupils' behaviour and personal development Adequate 3 Quality of teaching Inadequate 4 Quality of curriculum Inadequate 4 Pupils' welfare, health and safety Inadequate 4 Leadership and management Inadequate 4 Overall effectiveness of the boarding provision Inadequate 4

## **Summary of key findings**

#### This school is inadequate because:

- There are serious infringements in the way students are safeguarded. There are significant risks to the health and safety needs of boarders, day pupils, staff and visitors.
- The academic curriculum is not sufficiently adjusted to take account of students' prior learning, particularly for those following one year GCSE and sixth form courses. Consequently, their achievement is inadequate. There are insufficient opportunities for technological, and aesthetic and cultural learning.
- Teachers do not plan lessons to meet the needs and aptitudes of all students, in particular, for those who are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- Leaders and managers have not systematically monitored the college's residential and education provision to ensure that students achieve well and that the accommodation, curriculum, quality of teaching and welfare, and health and safety meet requirements and that improvements are made, where needed.

#### The school has the following strengths:

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Students are courteous, respectful and keen to succeed in their studies.
- Boarders generally enjoy their residential experience. They and the day students speak highly of the supportive relationships with both education and boarding staff.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for accommodation of students under 18 by further education colleges

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet 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. The details are listed in the full report.
- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for accommodation of students under 18 by further education colleges. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, two jointly with the vice principals, and made short visits to four lessons.
- Inspectors visited the residential provision, examined students' work and the college's boarding and education documentation and records, particularly relating to students' examination results and progress, safeguarding and their welfare, health and safety.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, who is also the proprietor, senior leaders for boarding and education, and other college staff. Inspectors also met with students and boarders.
- Inspectors also took account of the responses in 11 questionnaires completed by staff and collected the views of parents and carers through telephone calls and the results of the school's parental survey.

## Inspection team

Angela Corbett Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tina Shepherd

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sophie Wood

Social Care Inspector

## **Full report**

#### Information about this school

- Bales College was first registered as a co-educational school in 1989 by the present proprietor and is based on a single site near Kensal Green in North West London. The college was founded in 1966 and formerly known as the Modern Tutorial College.
- The college is registered to provide for up to 56 students aged between 13 and 18 years of age with boarding/residential provision for those of sixth form age. Currently there are 93 students on roll, of whom 43 are of sixth form age and eight are boarders.
- Most students join the college having started their secondary education at other schools with around a quarter of students coming from overseas. Many join to retake their GCSE and A-level qualifications seeking to improve on their previous results.
- A small minority of students speak English as an additional language with a few of these in the early stages of learning English. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The college's motto is 'perseverance' and it aims to 'provide students with an academically rigorous, socially responsible education which will see them develop into inspirational young people'.
- The college makes use of a local sports centre for teaching physical education.
- The last full inspection of the education provision was in September 2010 when the quality of education was judged as satisfactory but welfare, health and safety were found to be inadequate. An inspection of further education residential (known as boarding) provision in October 2011 also found that arrangements for students' welfare were inadequate. A joint boarding and education progress monitoring visit took place in March 2011 when inspectors found the school had made limited progress in addressing the concerns raised and a number of education regulations and national minimum standards for residential provision in further education colleges remained unmet. A further progress monitoring inspecting of boarding took place in April 2012 when the school's progress in addressing the areas of concern was judged to be satisfactory, however, several national minimum standards remained unmet and further recommendations were identified.
- Since the last full inspection of the college and boarding staffing changes include the official appointment of the boarding supervisor and, in June 2013 the appointment of two vice principals.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school must improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
  - meet the quality of teaching regulations listed below
  - plan and deliver lessons that are matched to the different needs of individual students
  - know how to support students who speak English as an additional language, and use this knowledge effectively in lessons
  - develop students' thinking and research skills so they become independent and resilient learners
  - develop students' ability to use and apply mathematical skills
  - mark students' work regularly, giving detailed feedback to students about how well they
    are doing, what they need to do to attain their target grades, and follow up to check that
    students make the necessary improvement.
- The school must improve the curriculum to raise students' achievement by:

- ensuring the curriculum regulations listed below are met
- ensuring there is provision for students who enter with gaps in their learning to have the required knowledge and skills to achieve at GCSE and higher-level qualifications
- identifying in the schemes of work, opportunities for students to develop their speaking, writing, reading and comprehension, communication, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), and wider learning skills.
- In order to improve the leadership and management of the school:
  - senior leaders should put in place regular and formal review and evaluation of all aspects
    of the school's work, including boarding, so they understand what is working well and
    focus improvement where needed
  - the proprietor/headteacher, must ensure that all the independent school regulations and national minimum standards for further education residential provision (boarding) are met.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
  - Implement the curriculum policy and ensure it is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and that these are implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1)).
  - Ensure the curriculum gives pupils of compulsory school age a full-time education with experience in the following areas of learning: technological, and aesthetic and creative (paragraph 2(2)(a)).
  - Ensure the subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils (paragraph 2(2)(b).
  - Ensure that for pupils above compulsory school age, there is a programme of activities appropriate to their needs (paragraph 2(2)(h)).
  - Ensure the curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph) 2(2)(i)).
  - Ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d)).
  - Ensure arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7).
  - Ensure arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders and have regard to the national minimum standards (paragraph 8).
  - Ensure the written policy complies with relevant health and safety laws and is being implemented (paragraph 11).
  - Ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13).
  - Ensure the written policy on first aid is fully implemented (paragraph 14).
  - Ensure the admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).
  - Ensure the proprietor checks that before they start work at the school, the person offered for supply by the employment business is suitable for the work required (paragraph 20(2)(b)).
  - Ensure the proprietor includes in any contractual arrangements with an employment business, the requirements set out in paragraphs 20(2)(a), including a requirement to supply a copy of a CRB certificate that contains any disclosures (paragraph 20(2)(d)).
  - Ensure that the appropriate checks are made on supply staff who care for, train, supervise
    or are in charge of children for whom accommodation is provided in an institution within
    the further education sector in England in a position which involves the provision of
    education or which brings the person regularly into contact with children or young persons
    (paragraph 20(2)(e)).
  - Ensure that in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, the register shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that it has carried out the checks referred to in 20(2)(a) together with the date the written

- notification that each check was made or certificate obtained, was received. (paragraph 22(5)).
- Provide accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils (paragraph 23B(1)(a)).
- Provide facilities for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which include a washing facility and are near to a toilet facility (paragraph 23B(1)(b)).
- Ensure that the school's accommodation and facilities are maintained to a sufficient standard to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils, as far as is reasonably practical (paragraph 23C).
- Ensure that external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises (paragraph 23E(b)).
- Ensure that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 23F(1)(c)).
- Ensure that boarding accommodation has regard for the national minimum standards (paragraph 23H).
- Provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language and the details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 24(1)(b)).
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for accommodation of students under 18 by further education colleges.
  - Students are protected from abuse (NMS 3).
  - Students' complaints are adequately responded to (NMS 5).
  - The safeguarding and promotion of students' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7).
  - There is clear leadership of residential provision in the college (NMS 8).
  - The college's organisation of residential provision safeguards students' welfare (NMS 10).
  - Students have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11).
  - Students receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 14).
  - Risk assessments and college record keeping contribute to student welfare (NMS 21).
  - Staff responsible for residential students have specific residential and welfare duties, with adequate induction and continued training (NMS 30).
  - Students are looked after by staff following clear residential and welfare policies and practice (NMS 31).
  - There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, including contracted staff and volunteers working with residential students (NMS 34).
  - Students have their own living accommodation, secure from public intrusion (NMS 37).
  - Students are given reasonable protection from safety hazards (NMS 42).
  - Students are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 43).

## **Inspection judgements**

#### Pupils' achievement

#### **Inadequate**

Students' achievement is inadequate. This is because teaching is not well matched to their needs and abilities, and too many students are enrolled on inappropriate courses for their current stage of learning. While students are committed and have positive attitudes to learning they are not encouraged to develop their thinking and research skills to become independent and resilient learners fully involved in their own education.

Students enter the school from differing starting points in relation to age, educational experience, ability, and for a minority their competency in speaking English as an additional language is in the early stages of development. There are relatively fewer students in Key Stage 3 and most make adequate progress, including in mathematics and English. The achievement of students following the two-year GCSE courses is adequate overall, with the proportion of students achieving five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, improving over the last three years to being above the national average in 2013. Progress in mathematics and biology is weaker than in other subjects. For students in Years 11 and 12 on the one-year GCSE course, achievement is inadequate because they are not sufficiently supported on these courses and for some they follow too few subjects, given that they are in full-time education.

Achievement on AS and A-level courses varies between subjects; however, too many students do not make adequate progress and too few leave with three pass grades. For example, in 2013 around half of the students entered for the examination failed to achieve pass grades at AS level and few achieved or exceeded their target grades. The college has now acted and put in place new systems for monitoring and checking students' progress. However, it has yet to ensure that students are placed on the most appropriate courses or receive sufficient additional support to ensure successful learning. Evidence from lesson observations suggests there is still variation in the progress being made by students on the GCSE, AS and A-level courses.

For students learning to speak English as an additional language the college does not sufficiently focus on developing their English speaking and writing skills to ensure that they make good progress in the language and are able to fully access the English education system. There are too few opportunities for all students to develop their writing skills through extended writing.

Too many achieve low grades at GCSE, AS or A level, although those that completed A level courses in 2013 did proceed to university.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development Adequate

Students' personal development is adequate and their behaviour is good. Students speak of how both boarding and education staff help them to develop their confidence and self-esteem in learning. Students of all ages and cultural backgrounds get on extremely well together. They talk of how they like to learn about each other's cultures, such as in an international evening held in the last academic year; however, such opportunities are too few. Nonetheless students speak with conviction about their views on tolerance, harmony and their understanding of different faiths. The school council is in the process of being set up for this academic year and students are planning an exciting programme of extra-curricular activities. However, as one student noted, by the time this is in place not all students will have sufficient time to fully benefit. Staff do not ensure that students, particularly those who join after the start of the school year, receive the relevant information about college life, which can limit their experiences.

All students receive lessons in personal, social, health and education (PSHE). This programme is supplemented by outside visitors who cover topics such as alcohol abuse and drugs awareness.

Together, these help students to develop and grow personally into mature and responsible young people with a clear sense of right and wrong. Students' spiritual development is adequate. The school environment is uninspiring. Some good opportunities for academic debate were seen during the inspection but there is no systematic approach to broadening horizons and enabling students to reflect and learn to appreciate the world around them. Students have very positive attitudes to learning although there is variability in their attendance. Too many students arrive late on a daily basis.

Students develop a balanced and adequate understanding of life in multicultural, democratic Britain and of public institutions and services through the PSHE and citizenship programmes and visits to places of interest such as museums and the Bank of England. Students experience life in the local community through their regular physical education lessons at the local sports centre and membership of a football league. Boarders and other older students make use of local amenities. However opportunities to get the best from their current community and location are missed, particularly for those who come from overseas.

#### **Quality of teaching**

#### **Inadequate**

The quality of teaching is inadequate overall. Some good teaching was observed during the inspection. However, some teachers have yet to consistently plan and deliver lessons that are tailored to meet each student's learning needs. This is particularly the case for those with lower prior attainment or those learning to speak English as an additional language. Teachers' subject knowledge and awareness of examination requirements are strong. Students say teachers and boarding staff want them to succeed and they provide additional support both within and out of lessons. However, this does not provide sufficient help to bridge gaps in students' learning so that they can access the work at the level.

In the best lessons there is good academic debate and support for subject-specific language development. However, the development of students' oral, grammatical and handwriting skills and their ability to apply and use mathematical skills is inconsistent. Teachers too often answer questions for the students, accept short responses or do not give students sufficient time to compose and rehearse their responses to help them prepare for examinations. Classrooms are uninspiring learning environments, often poorly kept, with few displays to inform or challenge students' thinking.

Most teachers plan and deliver lessons that cover the required content of examination courses and provide relevant guidance on answering examination questions. Where teaching is most effective students make good progress because of the strong relationships in the classroom, well-planned learning steps and the use of a wider range of approaches, such as ICT or other helpful resources. However, this is not consistently the case. Too many lessons lack variety and too often teachers do not provide students with sufficient time to apply or consolidate their learning or to develop their independent thinking or research skills. Consequently, students rely too heavily on their teachers, which has an adverse impact on their success in examinations.

Most teachers assess students' learning in lessons, and some provide effective verbal and written guidance to students on how they can improve on work and achieve at a higher level. However, this good practice is far from consistent and too much of students' work is unmarked or lacks helpful commentary and guidance. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to reflect on and respond to their verbal feedback and written comments.

Boarding staff work effectively alongside education staff contributing to the progress of both boarding and day students by, for example, participating in college trips, covering lessons and supervising evening study.

#### **Quality of curriculum**

#### **Inadequate**

The curriculum is inadequate because although the college has published a detailed curriculum policy it is not implemented effectively. Basic outlines of what will be taught are in place for all courses. However, these vary considerably in quality, and are often based on the examination board's subject content lists. In too many instances, such as in mathematics at Key Stage 4, they do not provide sufficient detail about progression, how students of different abilities will be taught, or identify the opportunities for basic and wider skill development. The college has not ensured the required breadth of curriculum coverage for students of compulsory school age. There are too few technological, aesthetic and creative opportunities with subjects such as design and technology, music and drama. Physical education is delivered through weekly theory lessons in school and timetabled lessons at the local sports centre. Teachers do plan what they intend to teach but often these plans do not outline how the needs of learners with different needs and aptitudes will be met. The college has yet to develop appropriate support for those learning to speak English as an additional language or to establish an interim provision to ensure students can access GCSE and Alevel courses from their current stage of learning based on their previous educational experience.

Citizenship and PSHE are well planned and taught to all age groups and adequately support students' personal development and knowledge of democracy and the British way of life. Careers advice has improved and is now an integral part of individual education plans along with a regular review of student aspirations and how to achieve these. Careers interviews now take place for older students, and sixth form students receive help with university applications.

The college provides students with some interesting and educationally informative trips, such as a residential visit to Normandy. Most after-school activities are related to subject studies, although some students routinely play football in a local league. Boarders and day students speak of a limited extra-curricular activity programme. The college does not provide a wide range of social and recreational activities.

#### Pupils' welfare, health and safety

#### **Inadequate**

Students' welfare, health and safety are inadequate. Several of the independent school regulations and national minimum standards for boarders are unmet; including those relating to the recruitment of staff, safeguarding, and health and safety. The residential and education accommodation presents significant and immediate risks to the health and safety needs of boarders, day students, staff and visitors. A deep lack understanding the importance of risk assessment and its place in mitigating risk is prevalent because staff members responsible for undertaking key areas of responsibility are not adequately trained or experienced. Significant premises checks including those for fire safety, security, gas and electrical checks are out of date, compromising fire safety in particular. Risk assessments for off-site activities lack rigour. Boarding staff provide boarders with information about staying safe when they are out in their own time. Procedural guidance is not always implemented.

The recruitment policy and procedure, which applies to both boarding and education staff, is detailed and a senior member of staff has undertaken safer recruitment training. Although checks are in place for all staff, the recruitment procedures are inconsistently applied and the arrangements for the use of contractual staff are inadequate. Staff have received child protection training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities. However, the recently revised and comprehensive child protection policy is neither fully understood nor implemented effectively. While staff are aware they have a duty to report concerns about individual students, they are not familiar with the new policy and lack awareness of how to deal with any allegations against staff. They do not recognise the wide variety of potential safeguarding risks for young people. Consequently, the safeguarding of both day and boarding students is inadequate.

The recently reviewed and detailed first-aid policy meets requirements but staff are not aware of

the revised procedures. Teaching and boarding staff communicate with each other regularly. However, much of this shared information is not documented which prevents effective monitoring and auditing of any welfare concerns of individual students. Boarders are provided with information about external support services and how to contact the college's independent listener. The behaviour management policy meets requirements and is implemented effectively. Incidents, rewards and sanctions are recorded adequately. The school has clear procedures for dealing with any bullying. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying. They say that on the rare occasions it occurs it is dealt with well by college staff, citing a special assembly following an incident. Boarders and day students say they feel safe and confirm that there is always a trusted adult to whom they can go in times of need and support, both academically or personally. The required practice of maintaining of registers does not meet requirements. The admissions register is kept electronically but printouts are not made at least annually and parental contact details are kept separately. Attendance registers are maintained daily but not completed consistently and no analysis is made of attendance rates to identify any patterns and concerns.

#### Leadership and management

#### **Inadequate**

Leadership and management are inadequate because an inadequate curriculum and quality of teaching result in inadequate achievement. Insufficient attention is given to ensuring the welfare, health and safety of day and boarding students both on and off the college site. Leadership and management procedures, processes and responsibilities for both boarding and education lack clarity. The monitoring and checking of all aspects of college life, including the impact of the curriculum on students' learning and the effectiveness of policies and procedures, is disjointed. Consequently, the effective oversight of both boarding and education is compromised. Evident concerns relating to the achievement, health, safety and well-being of boarders and day students are being missed. There are no formal systems in place for checking the extent to which independent school regulations and national minimum standards are met. The two vice principals have recently started a process of self-evaluation of the college's provision. They have started to monitor the quality of teaching and students' achievement and to put in place development planning to bring about change. This is providing a good platform for improvement. However, these new systems, which include the tracking of students' progress and the performance management of teachers, have yet to have an impact on students' safety or achievement.

The college premises provide adequate learning and boarding accommodation although the décor and displays are tired in most classrooms. While some carpets have been replaced, in many rooms they are damaged and grubby, and rooms are often untidy and appear uncared for. Separate toilet facilities are now clearly identified for staff, visitors and students. Parts of the outside patio areas have been improved to a high standard providing a pleasant environment where students can socialise. However, some pathways are uneven, some areas are untidy and the outside lighting is poor. As at the last inspection, there is still no provision for unwell, injured and sick boarders or day students. Most but not all of the required information is provided to parents and carers including termly written reports on their child's progress. However, the details of formal complaints over the last 12 months and support provided for students learning to speak English as an additional language are not published. The three parents and carers spoken to by telephone were positive about the work of the college and felt their children were well looked after and kept safe. The complaints policy meets requirements, although systems for dealing with complaints are not always followed. The proprietor has failed to ensure that all the regulations for independent schools and national minimum standards for

boarding are met.

Outcomes for young people	Adequate
Quality of service	Inadequate
Safeguarding	Inadequate
Leadership and management of the boarding provision	Inadequate

## What inspection judgements mean

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

### **School details**

Unique reference number101181Social care unique reference numberSC010897Inspection number420240DfE registration number213/6384

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.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for accommodation of students under 18 by further education colleges.

Type of school Independent

School status Independent day and boarding school

Age range of pupils

Gender of pupils

Number of pupils on the school roll

Number of part time pupils

Number of boarders on roll

8

ProprietorWilliam MooreChairNot applicableHeadteacherWilliam Moore

**Date of previous school inspection** 29–30 September 2010

**Annual fees (day pupils)** £5,025 - £10,650

**Annual fees (boarders)** £18,450

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