

# Bales College

742 Harrow Road, London, W10 4AA

## Inspection dates

22–23 January 2014

## Context of the inspection

- The college and boarding provision were last inspected on 8 to 10 October 2013. During this inspection it was found that the college failed to meet a significant number of the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for further education, notably in respect of: the curriculum and its teaching; the welfare, health and safety of students; the maintenance of the college and boarding accommodation; and the checking of the suitability of staff to work with children.
- This announced progress monitoring inspection was undertaken at the request of the Department for Education to check whether the failings identified against the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for further education in the inspection of October 2013, have been remedied, and identify which, if any, failings remain.
- The college submitted an action plan on 20 December 2013 to the Department for Education. The plan has yet to be formally evaluated, however, it was scrutinised and considered during the inspection.

## Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

## Regulations not met

The college's action plan outlines the steps to rectify each of the independent school standards and national minimum standards for further education failures identified in the October 2013 inspection. However, the success criteria by which the actions can be judged relate only to meeting the independent school standards and national minimum standards for further education, with no detail on how these will function in practice in relation to the achievement and welfare, health and safety of the day and boarding students on roll at Bales College.

The October 2013 inspection found that five regulations relating to the curriculum were not met. This was because, while the college published a detailed curriculum policy, it was not implemented effectively and this had a detrimental impact on students' achievement. The basic outlines of what was to be taught did not provide sufficient detail about progression, how the needs of students of different abilities were to be addressed or identify the opportunities for basic and wider skill development. This was particularly the case in mathematics at Key Stage 4 and for those students following one year GCSE and sixth form courses. Nor was there sufficient provision to ensure students could access GCSE and A-level courses from their current stage of learning based on their previous educational experience.

As outlined in the college action plan, senior leaders have devised a common format to enable teachers to detail the learning content and progression for each subject and course. The new schemes are in place for most courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; however, they have yet to be completed for Key Stage 3. Teachers are now using them to

inform their teaching. Senior leaders are aware that the schemes in place so far tend to be pitched at a high level with little indication of differentiation for different levels. There is no identification within the schemes of work of what prior learning is required to ensure that teachers can assess and address any gaps in students' knowledge and level of understanding. Signposting of basic and wider skill development is provided; however, this merely provides broad pointers and does not match the quality of the helpful guidance on resources and approaches for teaching the main subject content. It was also noted that the curriculum lacked the required breadth for students of compulsory school age, with too few opportunities for technological and aesthetic and creative subjects such as design and technology, music and drama. The college has organised a well-received art and design learning day, led by a sculptor, for Key Stage 3 students. However, the college has yet to develop a formal or strategic approach to ensuring a full range of experiences in these subjects for compulsory aged students. In the last report, concerns were raised about the degree of appropriate support for those learning to speak English as an additional language. Some training has now been given to staff to better support these students, with more consideration given to how this is planned and structured. It was also noted that out-of-the-classroom activities related to subject studies and the overall programme of extra-curricular, social and recreational activities were limited for all day and boarding students. The college has begun to consider how to improve this; for example, sixth form student council representatives are discussing ideas. However, there has been no tangible improvement to increase and broaden students' experiences, in particular for those in the sixth form. Consequently, all the failed curriculum regulations remain unmet.

Teaching and assessment were judged inadequate at the time of the October inspection. This was because some teachers did not consistently plan and deliver lessons that were sufficiently tailored to meet each student's current learning needs. This has a negative impact on the achievement of lower prior attainment or those learning to speak English as additional language students in particular. The college have followed the actions outlined in their action plan and introduced a new format for lesson planning that all staff are expected to use. Inspection evidence showed that this is being used almost universally. Teachers are now expected to give consideration to students' prior and future learning, as well as to planning for differing students' abilities and needs, or for those learning to speak English as an additional language. However, inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching is still variable. Teachers have yet to make proficient use of the new format to define how they will support individuals within their lessons, such as stretching the most able. Nonetheless, the most effective teachers do this intuitively and the new planning approach is helping weaker teachers to structure learning better within their lessons. Similarly, while more consideration is given to how students learning to speak English as an additional language will be supported, such as through pairing with English first language speakers, this is not yet undertaken by all teachers. In the best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge well to develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding. However, this is not consistently the case and too much teaching is pitched and planned at the same level, regardless of the mixed abilities and differing learning backgrounds and needs of students. Consequently, this teaching regulation remains unmet. Classrooms, while tidier, remain uninspiring learning environments with few displays or engaging resources to stimulate or challenge students' thinking.

The inspection in October 2013 judged welfare, health and safety to be inadequate. This related to significant failures to meet the independent school regulations and national minimum standards for boarders, including those relating to the recruitment of staff, safeguarding, and health and safety. It was found that the residential and education

accommodation presented significant, and immediate, risks to the health and safety needs of boarders, day students, staff and visitors. This was because there was a deep lack of understanding of the importance of risk assessment and its place in mitigating risk. Staff members responsible for undertaking key areas of responsibility were not adequately trained or experienced in risk management. It was found that significant premises checks, including those for fire safety and electrical checks were out of date, compromising fire safety in particular.

Following the inspection the college acted swiftly, commissioning independent fire safety and risk assessment audits. Many of the issues identified in these audits were noted in the October 2013 inspection report. Immediate remedial action has improved the security and fire safety of the premises, including the most serious potential fire risks identified in the audits. An internal staff member has been appointed as the college's health and safety manager. She has completed an on-line course and a more formal qualification is planned. Risk assessments are being completed in order of priority, but a number of these documents are not related directly to the education and/or boarding setting for which they are intended to mitigate risk. Both day and boarding students are better protected. Some risk assessments lack sufficient detail in relating the subject matter directly to the risks of working with children and young people. The health and safety officer is identifying further potential risks and actions needed to improve the premises on a day-by-day basis. However, at the current time there is no strategic approach and no audit trails in place for recording and checking their completion and effectiveness. It was also found at the time of the last inspection that risk assessments for off-site activities lack rigour; this is still the case. Consequently, while the regulation for fire safety is now met, the regulations and national minimum standards for ensuring day and boarding students' health and safety remain unmet.

It was noted in the October 2013 report that, while staff had received child protection training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities, the child protection policy was neither fully understood nor implemented effectively. It was also stated that staff were not able to recognise the wide variety of potential safeguarding risks for young people. The child protection policies and procedures have been revised and meet current guidance. All staff have been made aware of them. Senior personnel are aware of the variable knowledge and understanding some staff hold about their own roles and responsibilities. Additional training and individual sessions are planned and ongoing. The designated child protection officer demonstrates a strong commitment to embedding a stronger culture and awareness of safeguarding throughout the school. Appropriate consultations and referrals are being made to the local authority; records have improved and multi-agency working is now occurring. Current procedural guidance lacks clear details in dealing with missing pupils, and staff's use of their own mobile telephones to maintain contact with boarders puts them all at risk.

It was noted in the last report that the recently reviewed and detailed first-aid policy met requirements but staff were not aware of the revised procedures. This has now been remedied. Both education and boarding staff are suitably trained in first aid. Boarders' health needs are appropriately researched to ensure that they have access to the services and support they need. Staff are also made aware of the health needs of day students. All of the boarders are registered with local health care services and they are able to attend their appointments in private. If unwell, boarders remain in their bedrooms. Supervision arrangements for boarders lack clarity and this presents potential risks to their safety and well-being during such times. Consequently, while the independent school regulation for

first aid is now met, and the national minimum standard relating to health records is now met, there is one further failure noted in relation to the supervision of boarders who are ill.

During the October 2013 inspection, inspectors noted that the arrangements for the use of contractual staff for both boarding and education were inadequate. Actions are outlined in the college's action plan to address this. The college has revised and strengthened its arrangements in the use of contract and agency staff. The new practices are rigorous and provide appropriate safeguards against potentially unsafe adults serving to protect both day and boarding students. The required information is now correctly recorded on the college's single central register. All the previously unmet regulations and the national minimum standard for the use of contract and agency staff are now met. It was also stated in the last report that the common recruitment policy and procedure for boarding and education staff, while detailed, was inconsistently applied. The college has yet to revise its policy and procedures for checking the suitability of staff. As a result, the potential risk remains. Consequently, the college does not meet the regulation and the national minimum standard for ensuring the safe recruitment of staff, although all the required background checks for current staff are in place.

At the time of the October 2013 inspection it was found that maintenance of both the attendance and admission registers did not meet requirements. A range of actions was outlined in the action plan. A new admission register, kept electronically, containing all the required information is now in place for all students on roll from the start of September 2013. The college has in place arrangements to make routine printouts which are then signed, dated and stored. The daily attendance registers are now better kept, with improved recording of students who are taken off the roll. Some inconsistency in totalling the daily absences remains, but further training for form tutors is planned. Detailed analysis of student's daily attendance to identify any patterns and concerns is now undertaken, with effective follow up on any concerns with parents and, when needed, outside agencies. This regulation is now met.

During the October 2013 inspection, inspectors noted that, while the college premises provided adequate learning and boarding accommodation, the décor was tired, some carpets were damaged and grubby, sources of drinking water were unlabelled and rooms were often untidy and appeared uncared for. It was also noted that pathways were uneven and the outside lighting was poor. The college has acted to replace some carpets; repairs have been made to uneven pathways and additional exterior lighting installed. However, the new exterior lighting is not operational and, while carpets in two classrooms have been replaced, others remain grubby and tired. Drinking water is now clearly labelled. An area outside the annex classrooms remains uneven and unsafe, although the college has undertaken a risk assessment of this area to consider the safety of students. The quality of the boarding accommodation also remains tired and worn. Bedrooms are adequately furnished and equipped, but cleaning arrangements are inconsistently applied, as in the overall premises. This aspect is particularly noticeable with regards to bathrooms. One common room serves the boarding community and this is sparsely furnished with limited recreational equipment. Consequently, the regulations and national minimum standards for premises remain unmet with two further failures noted.

It was noted in the last report that there was no provision for unwell, injured and sick boarders or day students, a failure recorded in previous inspection reports. The college has refurbished a former office as a designated sick room with en-suite toilet facilities.

However, this is not yet in use. Consequently, the two regulations and one national minimum standard for the care for sick or unwell day and boarding students remain unmet.

At the time of the inspection in October 2013 it was found, while the school provided most of the required information for parents, carers and others, 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. This failing has been addressed with the appropriate information now published on the college website.

During the October 2013 inspection, 14 of the national minimum standards for boarding were not met. It was also stated that the monitoring and checking of all aspects of college life were disjointed. As a result, the effective oversight of both boarding and education was compromised and evident concerns relating to the achievement, health, safety and well-being of boarders and day students missed. The college is working to address this. For example, the organisation of boarders' sleeping arrangements has been reviewed. Current arrangements provide better protection for boarders and staff. However, during this visit a further seven failures in national minimum standards were recorded in relation to premises, catering, supervision of boarders and how well boarders are listened to and responded to. While there is a detailed action plan in place and the college is more aware of the need to check on the effectiveness of its provision, monitoring and checking, this has to be systematically established.

While leaders are more aware of the need to monitor and check the effectiveness of its provision, they have yet to establish systematic approaches for both education and boarding. The absence of robust monitoring systems means the boarding provision is unable to identify any potential areas of weakness, patterns and trends. There is no process in place for the regular self-assessment of the college's welfare practice. This is hindering the rapid and necessary progress needed, in particular for the boarding provision. Induction, supervision and on-going training provision for boarding staff are all areas of significant weakness. A very small team of motivated and potentially very capable staff is being let down by inadequate support and guidance. Job descriptions have not been reviewed nor updated and neither has the boarding staff handbook. Consequently, the national minimum standards for further education relating to the leadership of the residential provision, along with many other of the standards, remain unmet.

No real progress has been made with regards to boarders' activity provision. This remains very limited. Some planned trips have been cancelled and this is directly linked to insufficient staffing levels. It was noted in the last report that, while boarding staff provided boarders with information about staying safe when they are out in their own time, procedural guidance is not always implemented. The college has also begun to consider how to improve students' knowledge and awareness of staying safe. However, this has been more successful for younger students than day and boarding students. The college has yet to put in place a means of checking and addressing the needs of individuals.

The catering arrangements in place for boarders are variable. Breakfast and lunch arrangements serve the whole school and these are appropriate. The evening provision, affecting the boarders, is unsatisfactory due to poor serving and storage arrangements. This is exacerbated by the lack of provision for boarders to store, prepare and cook their own meals, hot drinks and snacks. Kitchens in the boarding provision, although due for

refurbishment, are currently not in use. Weekend arrangements include boarders being given funds to purchase their own meals. This arrangement creates a dependency upon take-away provision, as well as boarders frequently using their own funds to subsidise the amount given. Additional risks are subsequently encountered through boarders accessing the local high street to purchase food and hot drinks on dark evenings. Consequently, two further national minimum standards are unmet.

At key boarding times thin staffing levels restrict boarders' freedom of movement during the evenings. A limited amount of support and guidance is available for them during mandatory study times when they are all required to attend as a group. Boarders say they would prefer to study in their rooms, but they are all required to attend because of limited staff supervision levels. Consequently, two further national minimum standards are unmet.

### **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 The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 ('the Regulations'), and associated requirements**

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 students 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 students.	paragraph 2(2)(b)
Ensure that for students 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 students to learn and make progress.	paragraph) 2(2)(i)
Ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the students, 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 students 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 health and safety policy complies with relevant health and safety laws and is being implemented.	paragraph 11
Ensure the written policy on first aid is fully implemented.	paragraph 14
Provide accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of students.	paragraph 23B(1)(a)
Provide facilities for the short-term care of sick and injured students, 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	paragraph

sufficient standard to ensure the health, safety and welfare of students, as far as is reasonably practical.	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 boarding accommodation has regard for the national minimum standards.	paragraph 23H

**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
There is clear leadership of residential provision in the college.	NMS 8
Students have access to a range and choice of activities.	NMS 11
Students are listened to and responded to.	NMS 12
Students receive first aid and health care as necessary.	NMS 14
Staff are clear about the arrangements to ensure that students who are unwell while in accommodation are regularly checked.	NMS 15
Risk assessments and college record keeping contribute to student welfare.	NMS 21
There are adequate arrangements for meal three times a day in place for seven days week.	NMS 22
Students have access to drinking water and means of preparing food at reasonable time, in addition to ain meals.	MNS 23
Students are adequately supervised during their free time to reduce risks and provide access to activities.	NMS 28
Students can readily contact the member of staff responsible for them, when necessary.	NMS 29
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
The residential accommodation is adequately maintained, decorated and cleaned.	NMS 36
Students are given reasonable protection from safety hazards.	NMS 42
Students are suitably accommodated when ill.	NMS 43

## Inspection team

Angela Corbett HMI, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sophie Wood	Social Care Inspector

## 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 90 students on roll, of whom 43 are of sixth form age and 10 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 school and its boarding provision were last inspected in October 2013.
- No new permanent staff have been appointed since the last inspection.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101181
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC010897
<b>Inspection number</b>	440251
<b>DfE registration number</b>	213/6384
<p>This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.</p> <p>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.</p>	
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent
<b>School status</b>	Independent boarding school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	90
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	10
<b>Proprietor</b>	William Moore
<b>Chair</b>	Not applicable
<b>Headteacher</b>	William Moore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8–10 October 2013
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£5,025 – £10,650
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£18,450
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8960 5899
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