

Bales College

742 Harrow Road, London, W10 4AA

Inspection dates

7–8 May 2014

Context of the inspection

- The last full inspection of college and boarding provision took place on 8–10 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.
- An announced progress monitoring inspection was undertaken on 22–23 January 2014 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 had been remedied, and identify which, if any, failings remained. During this inspection, it was found that some of the failings had been remedied. However, a significant number of the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for further education remained unmet. In addition, some further national minimum standards for further education were failed in relation to the quality of the boarding accommodation and the health and safety of students.
- This present 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 progress monitoring inspection of January 2014 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 was scrutinised and considered during the January 2014 inspection. It was found that the college's action plan outlined 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 college submitted a further action plan on 4 April 2014 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 revised 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 and January 2014 inspections. College leaders have taken careful note of points raised by inspectors and built these into the plan for action. However, as before, 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. While the plan does provide a framework for improvement, it does not detail how the actions will function in practice or be monitored and reviewed over time. Systems for leaders to evaluate the quality of provision have yet to be established. Leaders have not considered when planning actions how these will lead to sustained and ongoing improvement over time or their impact on the achievement and welfare, health and safety of the day and boarding students.

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. By the time of the January 2014 visit, schemes of work were largely in place for Key Stage 4 and sixth form courses; however, they had yet to be completed for Key Stage 3. Senior leaders have continued to follow the actions outlined in the action plan. Schemes for Key Stage 3 are developing for many subjects, using a standard format. As with the schemes already developed, these outline what is to be taught throughout the year. However, in all but one of the schemes seen, there is still no detail about how wider skills will be developed. As before, none identifies the prior learning expectations which will ensure that students can access GCSE and A-level courses from their current stage of learning. While staff do make links between subjects, this is not formally noted in the schemes of work. The subject content tends to be pitched at one level. There is very little guidance for teachers on how to address the needs of different students, such as subject coverage and learning expectations for less-able students. The Year 7 scheme for mathematics is pitched too low; as a result, more-able students are not sufficiently stretched or challenged while the Key Stage 4 scheme is pitched too high for some students. Leaders have recognised this and have put in place additional support for the less-able students in Year 11 in mathematics. For GCSE and sixth form students, there is study support and Saturday monitoring and holiday sessions.

Insufficient progress has been made since January 2014 in ensuring the curriculum has sufficient breadth for students of compulsory school age. There are still too few opportunities for technological and aesthetic and creative subjects such as design and technology, music and drama. A recent Key Stage 3 trip to the London Transport Museum was well received by students, enabling them to make good gains in their technological learning. While the action plan indicates additional events, these are not enough to provide sufficiently varied and broad experiences. A plan or scheme for these areas has not been developed. Consequently, the college does not have an overview of where opportunities for technological experiences may come from. These include taught lessons such as information and communication technology (ICT) and art, from other subjects across the curriculum and from other activities and events so that gaps can be assessed and addressed. Schemes of work for ICT and art do not appear to be in place. There was no evidence found of musical development. The college has not ensured that the curriculum provides students with the opportunities to learn and make progress in all the required areas of areas of learning.

It was also noted at both inspections 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 is now tracking students' participation in events and activities; however, attendance rates are sometimes low for sixth form students. The college has continued to trial new experiences for students,

including Friday afternoon sixth form general studies lessons. However, the additional activities for boarding students have developed significantly more than that for non-boarders. The programme has yet to be strategically planned, to identify and provide sufficient breadth and variety of experiences across the sixth form years. Consequently, this and the other 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 had a negative impact on the achievement, in particular for students with lower prior attainment or those learning to speak English as additional language students. This was still the case at the time of the January 2014 visit, although training had led to more consideration being given to how students learning to speak English as an additional language would be supported. This weakness remains. In general, teachers are using the schemes of work to support their teaching. However, the quality of lesson planning using the standard format identified in the college's action plan is still too variable. Although the college has provided training for teachers, they have still to develop proficient use of the planning sheets. Too many teachers are still not giving sufficient thought to how they will meet the needs of individuals in lessons. In most instances, planning focuses too much on what the teacher will do and not what students will learn and how they will be helped to progress. In a good example of planning the teacher had identified what he expected the least able and most able students to learn and how he planned to deliver this within the lesson. Such practice is not the norm 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. When approaches to support students, for example for those learning to speak English as an additional language, are identified, these are not always implemented. As noted in the two previous visits, the most effective teachers do this intuitively, using their strong subject knowledge to recognise when students have not made progress, and use questioning to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. A new marking policy is in place and teachers have received training to improve the quality of their marking; however, this is not consistently implemented. Inspection evidence and the college's own records of monitoring show that application of the policy is inconsistent, both in terms of frequency of marking and in the frequency and quality of developmental comments. Teachers' use of the information gained from marking to inform their planning is too variable. Consequently, this teaching regulation in relation to planning remains unmet.

Classrooms are brighter as a result of new flooring and better cleaning; however, they remain uninspiring learning environments. Teachers are still not making the best use of displays or ICT to support and enhance students' learning. Students' access to ICT is limited to their own laptops at the current time because the six new computers recently purchased have yet to be installed. College leaders have taken action since the last visit to develop the quality of learning resources, with teachers currently evaluating the needs for their subjects.

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. By the time of the January 2014 inspection, remedial action had improved the security and fire safety of the premises. Although the regulation for fire safety was judged as met, several regulations and national minimum standards for

ensuring day and boarding students' health and safety remained unmet. The college's new health and safety manager has continued to drive improvements in health and safety. Immediate risks pertaining to site safety, electrical, gas and fire risks are now significantly reduced. The premises are secure and fire safety is sound, with alarm systems across the site now linked. Inspectors agreed that the college in its entirety is a safer, more secure environment than it was before. Risk assessments now cover key areas and some activities both on and off the college site. However, these are still variable in terms of quality and content. The college, while more aware of the need, have not ensured that students, in particular in Key Stage 4 and the sixth formers who do not board, are always made aware of the risks that relate to them, for example when they are out and about in the locality both supervised and unsupervised. Consequently, while the regulation for fire safety remains met, the regulations and national minimum standards for ensuring day and boarding students' health and safety remain unmet.

During the October 2013 inspection, inspectors noted that the arrangements for the use of contractual staff for both boarding and education were inadequate. By the time of the January 2014 visit, the college had acted on the actions identified in its action plan to strengthen its arrangements in the use of contract and agency staff so that the previously unmet regulations and the national minimum standard for the use of contract and agency staff were met. It was also noted that the college had yet to revise its policy and procedures for checking the suitability of staff. The college has since formalised its recruitment procedures and tested these through the appointment of two new boarding staff. The new practices are rigorous and provide appropriate safeguards against the recruitment of 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. Consequently, the college meets all the independent school regulations for checking the suitability of staff and the national minimum standard for ensuring the safe recruitment of staff.

It was noted in the October 2013 report that, while staff had received child protection training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities, they were not able to recognise the wide variety of potential safeguarding risks for young people. By the time of the January 2014 visit, the child protection policies and procedures had been revised and met current guidance. The actions outlined in the college's action plan have been undertaken. As a result, safeguarding policies and procedures continue to be strengthened. Additional and targeted staff training is ongoing and staff members across all departments demonstrate a growing awareness of the college's roles and responsibilities with regard to child protection. A culture of 'no secrets' and raising concerns is becoming embedded. The introduction of college-owned mobile phones avoids staff using their own personal mobile phones, when supervising boarders in particular. However, the college's policies, procedures, teaching and supporting strategies in relation to e-safety and the wider concepts of keeping young people safe while outside in community settings are not adequate. As a consequence, while systems for robust staff recruitment procedures are now in place, the overarching independent school standards and national minimum standards for safeguarding remain unmet.

At the time of the October 2013 inspection, it was found that maintenance of both the attendance and admission registers did not meet requirements. This was addressed by the time of the January 2014 visit. On this visit, the team checked that routine printouts of the electronically kept admission register, which was new in place at the time of the last visit, are being made, then signed, dated and stored. This regulation remains met.

During the October 2013 inspection, inspectors noted that, while the college premises provided adequate learning and boarding accommodation, the décor was tired both in the education and boarding areas, some carpets were damaged, grubby pathways were uneven and the outside lighting was poor. At the time of the January 2014 visit, much remedial work had been done, although some pathways remained uneven and the boarding bathrooms were poorly kept. Cleaning arrangements were inconsistent across the premises, particularly noticeable with regard to boarding bathrooms.

The remedial work has continued across all of the college accommodation. The new exterior lighting is now operational, there has been further renewal of classroom flooring and carpets, and the area outside the annex classrooms has been made safe. Cleaning arrangements have improved; however, the décor remains tired in both boarding and education. Nonetheless, the education accommodation is now adequate and the relevant independent school standard is met. The work planned for one bathroom has still to be undertaken and the single common room which serves the boarding community remains jaded, sparsely furnished and with limited recreational equipment. Consequently, while two of the national minimum standards are now met, the overall premises standard remains unmet.

At the time of October 2013 inspection, there was no provision for unwell, injured and sick boarders or day students. By the time of the January 2014 visit, the college had refurbished a former office as a designated sick room with en-suite toilet facilities. However, this was not yet in use. This suitably furnished and equipped facility is now in use and provides safety and privacy, as well as the safe storage of necessary medication and first aid equipment. Boarders have ready access to relevant health-care services and their immediate health and medical needs are known and understood by relevant staff members. The quality of this provision is complemented by a suitably qualified staff team in terms of first aid and medicine administration. All students are adequately supervised and attended to during periods of ill health. Consequently, the education regulations and one national minimum standard for the care for sick or unwell day and boarding students and the supervision of boarders who are ill are now met.

The college continues to ensure that all the required information for parents and carers is provided. Updates are published on the school website, such as details about current policies under review.

During the October 2013 inspection, 14 of the national minimum standards for boarding were not met. By the time of the January 2014 visit, this had risen to 17. It was stated that, while there was an action plan in place and the college was more aware of the need to reflect on the effectiveness of its provision, the systems for systematic monitoring had yet to be established. It was also noted that the boarding staff handbook had not been updated and the job descriptions and responsibilities of boarding staff established. The leadership and management arrangements for the boarding provision have been reformed to good effect. Additional staff members are now in post. While still very new to their posts, these staff members are benefiting from a revised and updated boarding management structure which makes their roles and function clear. Job descriptions, boarding guidance, induction processes and lines of accountability provide a clear steer for newer staff members. Additional and ongoing training and development needs are being recognised, with relevant training courses being identified as longer-term objectives. The boarding manager demonstrates a good awareness of the development needs of the boarding

provision. However, the impact of this thinking and planning is yet to come to fruition and cannot yet be fully evaluated in terms of its impact upon the benefits of current boarders. Senior leadership meetings are being held; however, the practice of self-evaluation is yet to become embedded. The concerted actions of the boarding and health and safety managers have reduced the number of unmet national minimum standards for further education to five. However, those relating to the leadership of the residential provision, along with several other standards, remain unmet.

At the time of the January 2014 inspection, the catering arrangements in place for boarders were variable and two further national minimum standards were judged as unmet. This was because the evening provision, affecting the boarders, was unsatisfactory due to poor serving and storage arrangements. This was exacerbated by the lack of provision for boarders to store, prepare and cook their own meals, hot drinks and snacks. Inspectors were concerned about the additional risks subsequently encountered through boarders accessing the local high street to purchase food and hot drinks on dark evenings. The additional staffing levels at weekends has had a positive impact upon meal provision. Boarders say they really enjoy a Sunday roast and the social element such opportunities bring in terms of bringing the boarding community together. Two new boarder kitchens have been installed. As a result, boarders no longer store food and snacks in their bedrooms or feel the need to leave the college site to find additional food and snack supplies at potentially risky times of the day and evening. Boarders commented very positively on these new arrangements. Consequently, the relevant national minimum standards are now met.

At the time of the January 2014 inspection, it was found that limited staffing levels restricted boarders' freedom of movement during the evenings and two further national minimum standards were judged as unmet. It was also viewed that boarders' activity provision remained very limited. Increased staffing levels mean that boarders are now better supervised and there are more opportunities for extra-curricular activities both on and off the site. Boarders were very appreciative of this. Boarders now also know who to contact in case of difficulty outside the school day and staffing levels provide adequate supervision levels for both on- and off-site activities. Consequently, these two national minimum standards now met.

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 pupils of compulsory school age a full-time education with experience in the following areas of learning: technological, and aesthetic and creative. 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 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

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

The residential accommodation is adequately maintained, decorated and cleaned. NMS 36

Students are given reasonable protection from safety hazards. NMS 42

Inspection team

Angela Corbett, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Cox	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Lindfield	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, although the college admits students from the age of 11. Currently, there are 87 students on roll, of whom 41 are of sixth form age and nine are boarders, with seven students in Years 7 and 8.
- 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 students 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 school and its boarding provision took place in October 2013, with a progress monitoring inspection in January 2014.
- One boarding supervisor has left the college and two new boarding supervisors have been appointed. No new permanent teaching staff have been appointed since the last inspection. Although two teachers have left, their posts are being covered by teaching agency staff.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher.

School details

Unique reference number	101181
Social care unique reference number	SC010897
Inspection number	446332
DfE registration number	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>	
Type of school	Independent
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	9
Proprietor	William Moore
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	William Moore
Date of previous school inspection	8–10 October 2013 22–23 January 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,025 – £10,650
Annual fees (boarders)	£18,450
Telephone number	020 8960 5899
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