

Bales College

742 Harrow Road, London, W10 4AA

Inspection dates

24–25 February 2015

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- An announced progress monitoring inspection was undertaken on 22 to 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 boarding for further education in the inspection of October 2013 had been remedied, and identify which, if any, failings remain. During the 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 boarding for further education remained unmet. In addition, some further national minimum standards for boarding for further education were failed in relation to the quality of the boarding accommodation and the health and safety of students.
- 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 required improvement.
- An announced progress monitoring inspection was undertaken on 7 and 8 May 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 boarding for further education in the inspection of January 2014 had been remedied, and identify which, if any, failings remained.
- The action plan submitted to the Department for Education on 4 April 2014 was scrutinised and considered during the May 2014 inspection. It was found that the plan was not underpinned by success criteria by which to judge the impact and effectiveness of the actions. The inspection found that some failings had been remedied, with no further failings identified. However, ten of the independent school standards and six of the national minimum standards for boarding for further education remained unmet.
- The college submitted their third action plan to the Department for Education on 3 September 2014. This plan was evaluated by Ofsted on the 22 October 2014, when it was judged to require improvement.
- This present unannounced and integrated progress monitoring inspection was undertaken at the request of the Department for Education to evaluate the progress made by the college in implementing its action plan to address the failed independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding for further education which remained unmet at the time of the May 2014 inspection visit.

Main findings

Curriculum

- The May 2014 inspection found that five regulations relating to the curriculum were not met. Although schemes were in place for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, this was not the case of all Key Stage 3 subjects, and there were too few opportunities for aesthetic and creative and technological learning. In most of the schemes there was no detail about how wider skills would be developed and there was variability in how links between subjects were identified. None identified the prior learning expectations to ensure students could access GCSE and A-level courses from their current stage of learning. The schemes contained very little guidance for

teachers on how to address the needs of different students. The college stated in its action plan that it would train staff to develop schemes of work to cover all courses and areas of learning. They also planned to: identify within the schemes of work the opportunities for developing wider skills and links with other subjects, including aesthetic and creative and technological learning; develop a map of these opportunities to provide an overall view of the curriculum; and install new computers to help students develop their technological skills. The college has followed through on these actions, including the development of new schemes of work for mathematics, art and information and communication technology. Consequently students now have opportunities to learn and make progress in all the areas of learning, firmly based on the written schemes of work.

- The May 2014 inspection viewed that the overall programme of extra-curricular, social and recreational activities was too limited for all day and boarding students, including for sixth form students. In its action plan the college stated they would develop a calendar of sixth form events and a scheme of work for sixth form enrichment. A new assembly programme is broadening all students' experiences, and has included coverage of current affairs. Social experiences for boarders have continued, although they reported they would like greater variety. As a result of implementing the action plan, this and all the other regulations concerning the curriculum are now met.

Teaching

- At the time of the May 2014 visit some teachers did not consistently plan and deliver lessons that were sufficiently tailored to each student's learning needs. The school's action plan stated that leaders would write a new marking policy and monitor its implementation through regular work scrutiny. The college also planned to provide teachers with training on planning lessons to meet the needs of individual within lessons, including those learning to speak English as an additional language. Regular lesson observations were to be used to review the quality of teaching and to identify where additional support for teachers was needed. As a result of these actions, teachers are now planning lessons tailored to students' abilities and stage of learning. A new system for collating students' performance data is helping college staff to be more aware of students' targets and current achievement. This regulation is now met.

Welfare

- It was noted in the May 2014 inspection that, while staff had received child protection training, they were not able to recognise the wide variety of potential safeguarding risks for young people. In addition, the college had not ensured that older day students were always made aware of the risks that relate to them, for example when they were out and about in the locality both supervised and unsupervised. The college stated in the action plan that they would develop an integrated personal, social and health education scheme for all students, including a full enrichment programme for sixth form students. The plan noted that that this would include providing students with the opportunities to learn and discuss risks, including with respect to e-safety. The college also planned to undertake an e-safety review and put in place guidelines for staff and students. Since September 2014 the leadership of safeguarding has changed. Both the boarding and education teams are clear about the changes which have been made to procedures. However, some of the associated guidance does not reflect these changes, for example, the whistle-blowing procedure. Students have undertaken street safety talks so they are more aware of potential risks when out and about. Staff and students have received training on e-safety and now have a better awareness of the potential risk of young people using the internet, including cyber-bullying. However, this training has been delivered only by college leaders and does not provide sufficient scope and breadth for staff and students. For example, social media discussions did not focus on those currently used by young people such as 'Instagram' and 'Snapchat'. The boarding team does monitor the on-going safety and welfare arrangements for the boarders but when particular issues arise, individual arrangements are not always fully communicated throughout the team. This omission presents potential welfare and safeguarding risks, so that requirements are still not met. In addition, the college has still yet to publish a revised safeguarding policy on the college website.

- At the time of the May 2014 visit the college had met all the independent school regulations for checking the suitability of staff and the national minimum standard for ensuring the safe recruitment of staff. Since then the college has revised safeguarding and recruitment policies in response to the revised statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' published in April 2014. However, the revisions have several shortcomings. While they have taken note of many of the points in this guidance for the recruitment of staff, they have omitted to reference, undertake or record the required checks on prohibition of teaching. Consequently, four of the new independent school regulations for the suitability of teaching staff are now not met. Boarding supervisors are safely recruited to work at the college.
- There is no internal or external independent review of the college's systems and procedures for their effectiveness or to ensure they fully comply with the latest statutory guidance from the Secretary of State. Improvements with regards to the college's safeguarding practices are evident but the lack of a robust approach means that both the independent school regulations and national minimum standard for safeguarding in education and boarding remain unmet.
- The May 2014 inspection judged that while risk assessments covered key areas, some were too variable in terms of quality and content. The college's action plan stated that leaders would continue to carry out risk assessments for on- and off-site activities, and then regularly review and document changes to risk assessments. In addition, the health and safety committee would meet regularly to monitor, review and evaluate provision in day and boarding with respect to incidents, accidents and first aid. The college have acted on these plans. Generic and individual risk assessments are now in place and regularly reviewed by the new health and safety committee. The boarding team understands these processes which give added safeguards towards site security, safety and boarders' welfare. Routine health and safety checks are further supported by external servicing agreements and checks. Consequently, the regulations and national minimum standards for ensuring day and boarding students' health and safety are now met.
- In the May 2014 inspection it was viewed that boarders were not given reasonable protection from safety hazards. The action plan stated the outside store room would be made safe. This action together with other external improvements provides students with much safer and pleasant spaces for them to socialise or play games. The required safety checks are undertaken and immediate health and safety concerns swiftly reported. Consequently, the national minimum standard for protection from hazards is now met.
- In the May 2014 visit it was judged that the boarding accommodation was not adequately maintained, decorated and cleaned. To improve the décor and maintenance the college stated in its action plan that the common room would be refurbished, the basement area improved and the boiler in the main boarding house replaced. The college has carried out these actions. However, the general level of cleanliness is still poor because cleaning arrangements are insufficient, although boarders' individual bedrooms are suitably furnished and equipped. Consequently, the national minimum standard and independent school standard for boarding accommodation are still unmet.
- At the time of the May 2014 visit, it was viewed that the leadership of boarding and induction arrangements were not well enough established. This was because college leaders did not have robust systems for the systematic monitoring or checking that the national minimum standards were met. The college action plan stated that systems to monitor and evaluate the provision were to be established. Other actions included support for the boarding manager, induction training for new staff, staff appraisals and additional training identified and acted on. The college has carried out these plans to some extent. However, lines of responsibility of the new leadership of boarding are not made clear. Regular boarding meetings are being used to check on the college's progress with the action plan but there is no independent oversight or involvement with the reviewing and monitoring of provision. Meetings do not explore the on-going need to develop the boarding provision. Boarding supervisors typically leave the college after one to two years in post. This has a negative impact upon the college's ability to effectively grow and develop its boarding team. New staff do receive induction guidance and training but the process is poorly recorded. An appraisal process is in place for boarding staff but this is disjointed and ineffective because the majority of the staff members involved leave the college

before it can have an impact upon their professional development. Consequently, the two failed national minimum standards relating to the leadership of the residential provision are still unmet.

Quality of leadership and management

- The college leaders have focused their action planning to address the issues raised during the May 2014 inspection. However, leaders, including the proprietor, have yet to establish systems for ensuring that there are qualitative and measurable success criteria by which actions can be shaped and then judged for their effectiveness and to inform future planning. Overall, the rate of improvement and its sustainability is hampered by the absence of any external independent advice or monitoring processes. While some actions have ensured that more of the previously failed independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding for further education are met, some failures in standards remain both in boarding and education. Consequently, the new independent school standards for leadership and management are not met.

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

The school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements

- The school must 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 (paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- The school must ensure that arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders and have regard to the national minimum standards (paragraphs 8, 8(a) and (8)(b)).
- The school must ensure that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction (paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b)).
- The school must ensure that for each member of staff it is recorded in the single central register, whether a check was made to establish whether the member of staff is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed (paragraphs 21(1) and 21(3)(b)).
- The school must ensure that boarding accommodation has regard for the national minimum standards (paragraph 30).
- The school must ensure that the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's website (paragraph 32(1)(c) and 32(1)).
- The school must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

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).
- 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).

Inspection team

Angela Corbett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Griffiths

Additional 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 was 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. However, the college admits students aged 11 and a few remain until the age of 20. Currently, there are 92 students on roll aged between 11 and 20 years of age, of whom 53 are of sixth form age and nine are boarders, with nine 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 college and its boarding provision took place in October 2013, with progress monitoring inspections in January and May 2014.
- Since the May 2014 inspection six staff have left the college. This includes an Assistant Principal, the boarding manager, two teachers and two full-time boarding supervisors. Two new boarding supervisors, one part-time, and two teachers have joined the school. One teaching post is covered by a teaching agency staff member. The business manager and Assistant Principal now have a shared responsibility for the boarding provision. The business manager has day-to-day responsibility for boarding. The business manager now has the help of a new administrative assistant.
- The school's senior leadership is now comprised of the Principal, the Assistant Principal, the business manager and the director of studies. The proprietor is also the Principal.

School details

Unique reference number	101181
Social care unique reference number	SC010897
Inspection number	456530
DfE registration number	213/6384

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

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 boarding school
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form	53
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 7–8 May 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,025–£10,950
Annual fees (boarders)	£18,750
Telephone number	020 8960 5899
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