

Bales College

742 Harrow Road, London W10 4AA

Inspection dates

13–14 October 2015

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- This unannounced progress monitoring inspection was undertaken on 13 and 14 October 2015 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 found in the inspection of February 2015 had been remedied.
- This inspection is the fourth progress monitoring inspection since a full inspection of education and boarding in October 2013, when a significant number of independent school standards and the national minimum standards for boarding for further education were judged to be unmet. Concerns were raised at this time over the quality of education, the premises and the welfare, health and safety arrangements for students.
- The college submitted its fourth action plan to the Department for Education on 12 June 2015. This plan was evaluated by Ofsted on 8 July 2015, when it was judged to require improvement. The college has previously submitted action plans in December 2013, April 2014 and September 2014, all of which were also judged to require improvement when evaluated by Ofsted.
- Progress monitoring visits to assess the progress the college was making in meeting independent school standards and the national minimum standards for boarding for further education took place in January 2014 and May 2014. At the last progress monitoring inspection, which took place on 24 and 25 February 2015, it was found that, while some failings had been remedied, 18 of the independent school standards and four of the national minimum standards for boarding for further education remained, or were further identified, as unmet. This included those for safeguarding and the new independent school standards for leadership and management.

Main findings

Welfare, health and safety

- The inspection of February 2015 found that the college did not meet the requirements for safeguarding. It was viewed that training for staff and students in safeguarding matters, including for online safety, lacked breadth and depth, and that when particular concerns about boarders arose the individual arrangements were not always fully communicated throughout the staff team.
- In its action plan, the college stated that its safeguarding and safe recruitment policies and procedures had been updated to reflect the latest safeguarding guidance. They had plans to raise the awareness and understanding of both staff and students, through training for new and existing staff, information posters and the curriculum, and to put in place arrangements for reviewing and monitoring the school's safeguarding policies. In revising the safeguarding policy and procedures, leaders did take account of the March 2015 Department for Education statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. However, several shortcomings remain. For example, not all the recruitment checks the college undertakes when recruiting new staff are listed, including the right to work and prohibition from teaching checks and how the college

would manage student-on-student allegations, and there is no reference to radicalisation and extremism or to its prevention. Further, not all leaders were aware of the July 2015 revised version of the statutory guidance and the first section of this guidance had not been shared with staff, as required. Nonetheless, some of the planned actions have been successfully completed. Interviews with staff and students show a higher awareness of safeguarding issues by staff and a greater awareness by students of how to stay safe online.

- The vice-principal, who leads on safeguarding, has undertaken a basic audit of provision, but this lacks rigour and independence. The proprietor has not had sufficient regard for the Part two requirements of the statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* for ensuring that the college's safeguarding systems are effective.
- The Principal manages all of the admissions enquiries and decisions without input from any other senior leaders. Consequently, the admissions process occurs in separate stages and fails to build a full and well-documented record for the boarding team in relation to each newcomer's safety and welfare. This particularly applies to those who join from overseas.
- This approach comprises both day students' and boarders' welfare and, together with the other shortcomings, means that the safeguarding and welfare requirements are still not met.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

- At the time of the February 2015 visit, it was found that the college had omitted to reference, undertake or record the required checks in relation to teachers and possible prohibition from teaching. In its action plan, the school stated it had already put in place a system for carrying out this check. Several staff have been appointed since the last visit. Checks of the staff files for these appointments show that they have been checked against the prohibition from teaching list. Further, the checks have been recorded on the college's single central register together with the dates on which they were undertaken, as required. Consequently, the four previously failed independent school regulations for the suitability of teaching staff are now met.

Premises of and accommodation at school

- In the February 2015 inspection, it was judged that the general level of cleanliness in the boarding accommodation was still poor because cleaning arrangements were insufficient. The college has carried out its intended plans to deep clean the carpets over the summer break and revise the cleaning schedule. Communal areas and individual boarders' bedrooms are cleaned on a weekly basis and the bathrooms cleaned three times each week. While some boarders expressed concerns about the cleaning arrangements, inspectors concluded that the college's maintenance and cleaning arrangements are satisfactory. Consequently, both the national minimum standard and independent school standard for boarding accommodation are now met.

Provision of information

- At the last inspection, it was found that the college's current safeguarding policies had yet to be published on the college website. Although the safeguarding policies have been revised and are available on the college website, the arrangements do not meet requirements. Consequently, the standard for publishing the college's safeguarding arrangement is again not met.

Quality of leadership and management

- At the time of the February 2015 inspection, it was found that leaders, including the proprietor who is also the Principal, had yet to establish systems to check that all of the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding for further education were met. It was also viewed that:
 - improvement planning was hampered by the lack of use of any criteria for measuring the success of actions and the absence of any external independent advice or monitoring processes for either education or boarding provision
 - the lines of responsibility for the leadership of boarding were not clear

- induction guidance and training for boarding staff, in particular, was poorly recorded
- the appraisal process for boarding staff was ineffective.
- The external monitoring and scrutiny arrangements described within the action plan have not occurred in practice. There remains an absence of wider monitoring, ongoing self-review and rigorous checking to improve the quality of students' education and, for those that board, their boarding experiences. For example, the college has not robustly checked that all staff have seen the current version of the safeguarding policy or Part one of the statutory guidance, as required. The proprietor has yet to secure the services of an external consultant as stated in the college action plan to provide some independent monitoring or external advice to aid improvement. Where there is any monitoring of college systems, these are undertaken by the staff who lead on them, including for safeguarding. This is preventing improvement and development in both education and boarding provision.
- The proprietor has focused his efforts on the recruitment of students and planning for new buildings and facilities. He delegates the key day-to-day operational responsibilities to the single vice-principal, director of studies and business manager. The improvements in health and safety and the quality of teaching seen in the February 2015 visit, promoted by these three leaders, have been sustained. Boarding supervisors now understand the roles and responsibilities of the vice-principal and the business manager. However, senior leaders demonstrate a superficial reactive response from the regular meetings with boarders, which does not sufficiently tackle the issues they raise or put in place plans for longer-term improvement. The three boarding supervisors from the last inspection are still in post. A new formal appraisal system is described as being ready to implement, but no member of the boarding team, including the two managers, has had their performance or development needs appraised. While mandatory training, such as child protection, first aid and fire safety, is all current, no progress has been made with regard to the ongoing and wider training and development needs of the boarding supervisors and senior leaders to meet the differing needs and ages of boarders. Consequently, the two failed national minimum standards relating to the leadership of the boarding provision are still unmet.
- On a day-to-day basis, the operation of boarding and education run smoothly, but there is no evidence of evaluation or development planning for either of the provisions. Poor monitoring systems fail to ensure compliance with the independent school and boarding standards. While five of the previously failed independent school standards and one of the national minimum standards for boarding for further education are now met, others, including those for safeguarding, are not. Consequently, the 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 requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements:

- 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)).
- 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)).
- Ensure the particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website (paragraphs 32(1) and 32(1)(c)).
- 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) and 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).

School details

Unique reference number	101181
Social care unique reference number	SC010897
Inspection number	10007144
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 boarding schools.

The inspection of residential 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 residential special schools.

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	74
Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form	60
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	11
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 24–25 February 2015
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,350–£10,950
Annual fees (boarders)	£19,650
Telephone number	020 8960 5899
Email address	info@balescollege.co.uk

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 74 students on roll aged between 11 and 20 years of age with five in Years 7 and 8 and 51 of sixth form age, of whom 11 are boarders. This is a fall of 16 students since the last visit. In the sixth form, 11 students are following one-year GCSE courses and 40 are studying for advanced level qualifications.
- 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 and February 2015.
- As at the time of the visit in February 2015, the school's senior leadership is comprised of the Principal, the vice-principal, the business manager and the director of studies. The proprietor is also the Principal. Since then, no employed staff have left the college. Five part-time teachers have joined the college to replace a number of agency staff. The business manager has responsibility for boarding, supported by the vice-principal.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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