

Bales College

742 Harrow Lane, London W10 4AA

Inspection dates

8–9 June 2016

Overall outcome

Independent school standards met

Context of the inspection

- This unannounced inspection, undertaken at the request of the Department for Education, is the fifth integrated progress monitoring visit to the college.
- A full integrated inspection of education and boarding took place between 8 and 10 October 2013. At this inspection a significant number of independent school standards and the national minimum standards for boarding for further education were unmet. Concerns were raised at this time over the quality of education, the premises, and the welfare, health and safety arrangements for both day and boarding pupils.
- 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 progress monitoring inspection. It was found that the college's action plan required improvement.
- 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 remained. 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 pupils.
- The action plan submitted to the Department for Education on 4 April 2014 was scrutinised and considered during an announced progress monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 May 2014 undertaken at the request of the Department for Education. 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, 10 of the independent school standards and six of the national minimum standards for boarding for further education remained unmet.
- The college submitted its third action plan to the Department for Education on 3 September 2014. This plan was evaluated by Ofsted on 22 October 2014, when it was judged to require improvement. Following this, a third progress monitoring inspection took place on 24 and 25 February 2015. The inspection 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 the new independent school standards for leadership and management.
- The college submitted its fourth action plan to the Department for Education on 12 June 2015. This plan was evaluated by Ofsted on the 8 July 2015, when it was judged to require improvement. Following this, a fourth progress monitoring inspection took place on 13 and 14 October 2015. The inspection found that, while some failings had been remedied, eight of the independent school standards and three of the national minimum standards for boarding for further education remained unmet. No further standards were identified as unmet.
- This visit focused on the independent school standards and national minimum standards that were identified as unmet in the October 2015 inspection. During the inspection, the inspectors met with: the proprietor, who is also the principal; the assistant principal, who also acts as the designated lead for safeguarding; the boarding manager; other staff; and groups of pupils and

boarders. They made visits to lessons and the boarding accommodation. The inspectors also scrutinised a wide range of school and boarding documentation, including that for safeguarding, and the college's action plan. Inspectors also took account of a complaint made by a pupil in March 2016 about the quality of catering, the care of boarders when they are unwell and the quality of teaching.

- Following the inspection, the college wrote an action plan. However, this has not been evaluated by Ofsted.

Main findings

Welfare, health and safety

- The inspection of October 2015 found that the college did not meet the requirements for safeguarding. It was judged that the college's arrangements for safeguarding did not reflect the most recent statutory guidance, the proprietor did not sufficiently check the effectiveness of the safeguarding systems, and the admission process failed to build a full and well-documented record in relation to each boarder's safety and welfare.
- The college has implemented its action plan. Leaders have revised the safeguarding policy to fully reflect the July 2015 'Keeping children safe in education' statutory guidance. This provides staff with clear guidance about the different aspects of safeguarding and their legal duty to report concerns in relation to the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. The college leaders have also undertaken a full risk assessment and put in place a range of actions to mitigate the risks to pupils of radicalisation and extremism.
- Staff awareness at all levels of a wide range of safeguarding issues has risen considerably as a result of both internal and external training and the more open approach to safeguarding. Staff have benefited from training, including that for online safety, child exploitation and the prevention of radicalisation. They are much more confident to talk about and recognise signs and symptoms. This is leading to better learning for both day and boarding pupils about how to stay safe and ensures that any issues or concerns are dealt with appropriately. Leaders now track training to ensure that all staff, both day and boarding, have participated and seen the latest safeguarding guidance, as required.
- The assistant principal, with the proprietor and other senior leaders, has established systems for regularly checking the effectiveness of the college's safeguarding systems, as required in part two of the 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance.
- The college leaders are now taking a much more rigorous approach to collecting and recording information about pupils both at the admission stage and for those already on the college roll. Leaders have revised boarders' welfare plans to ensure that they fully reflect their care needs.
- This much more robust approach means that safeguarding and welfare standards for both day and boarding pupils are now met.

Provision of information

- At the last inspection, it was found that, although the college's current safeguarding policies were available on the college website, the arrangements did not meet requirements. The revised safeguarding arrangements now meet the requirements and are published on its website. Consequently, the standard for publishing the college's safeguarding arrangements is now met.

Quality of leadership and management

- At the time of the October 2015 inspection it was found that leaders, including the proprietor who is also the principal, were not ensuring that the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding for further education were met and safeguarding arrangements were effective.
- The college leaders have successfully implemented the action plan that they put in place after the October 2015 inspection. They have undertaken additional training and made visits to other schools to develop their understanding of both safeguarding and the day-to-day running of the college. This is aiding improvement. In line with a previous action plan, the proprietor has now

secured the services of an external consultant to provide some independent monitoring or external advice to further validate this review and improvement cycle.

- Leaders now have clear vision of the standards that they expect across the college, including for boarding and the safeguarding of pupils. They have established systems to monitor and check their action planning, the effectiveness of their safeguarding arrangements, and their compliance with the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding. They are now routinely reviewing the quality of both boarding and education, and taking action for improvement. This new and proactive approach represents a significant and positive shift in the approach to leadership and management of the college. Furthermore, staffing for both education and boarding has stabilised because there are clear and well-understood expectations, systems and procedures for staff to follow.
- During the inspection, time in lessons and discussions with pupils confirmed that leaders have sustained the improvements in teaching seen in previous inspections. They have secure knowledge of the strengths and areas for development in teaching. Leaders have programmes in place to develop teaching quality and provide personalised support to teachers where needed.
- In line with the college's action plan, the boarding supervisors have now received reviews of their performance to identify their training needs. There are appropriate plans in place for the imminent appraisal of the senior management team by an independent consultant. The boarding team continues to have up-to-date training in basic areas such as fire safety, safeguarding and first aid. Further training has widened their skills and knowledge base to help them and other staff to better meet both boarders' and day pupils' needs. Training includes that for child sexual exploitation, e-safety and the government's 'Prevent' duty.
- There is improved management accountability for boarders' welfare. Boarders have opportunities to give their views on all aspects of boarding at weekly meetings. Leaders respond appropriately to suggestions made, for example arranging a trip to Thorpe Park, making alterations to the menu to include more foods of varying cultures and providing better internet access. All pupils, including boarders, are confident about approaching staff at any time with their views or suggestions. Overall, inspectors found the quality of food to be adequate and that boarders were treated in line with the college's policies and procedures, including when they are unwell.
- Consequently, the independent school standards for leadership and management and the two previously failed national minimum standards relating to the leadership of the boarding provision are all met.

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

The school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements.

The school meets the national minimum standards for accommodation of students under 18 by further education colleges.

Inspection team

Angela Corbett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jackie Graves

Social Care Regulatory 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 pupils and students aged between 13 and 18 years of age with boarding/residential provision for those of sixth form age. However, the college admits pupils aged 11 and a few remain until the age of 20. Currently, there are 75 learners on roll aged between 11 and 20 years of age, with five in Years 7 and 8, and 49 of sixth-form age of whom 11 are boarders. In the sixth form, 11 students are following one-year GCSE courses and 39 are studying for advanced level qualifications.
- Most pupils join the college having started their secondary education at other schools, with around a quarter of pupils coming from overseas. Many join to retake their GCSE and A-level qualifications, seeking to improve on their previous results.
- A small minority of pupils 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 park and sports centre for teaching physical education.
- The proprietor is also the principal. The school's senior leadership is comprised of the principal, the vice-principal, the business manager and the director of studies. The business manager has responsibility for boarding, supported by the vice-principal.
- Since the last inspection in October 2015, no staff have left or joined the college.
- The last full inspection of the college and its boarding provision took place in October 2013, with progress monitoring inspections in January 2014, May 2014, February 2015 and October 2015.

School details

Unique reference number	101181
Social care unique reference number	SC010897
Inspection number	10020548
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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form	49
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 13–14 October 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

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