

Inspection of Birmingham Independent College

Albert Hall, Witton Road, Aston, Birmingham, West Midlands B6 5NU

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at Birmingham Independent College know pupils well. They take the time to understand pupils' individual needs and build positive relationships with them. One pupil, speaking for many, told inspectors, 'Because of this college, our needs are not a hindrance to us.' Pupils achieve well because of the care and support they receive.

Pupils are happy and generally behave well. They enjoy college and make positive contributions in lessons. Leaders do not tolerate incidents of bullying. They make sure that pupils feel safe and know where to go if they have a concern.

Leaders have high expectations for what they want pupils to learn. They have prioritised the need to ensure pupils leave the college with key knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and science. Leaders also ensure that pupils complete other qualifications in areas such as food hygiene.

Leaders are keen to extend pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. As part of an enrichment programme, many pupils take part in karate lessons every week. Other pupils have worked with a charity to put together bags at a food bank and prepare meals for local elderly residents.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. They do not see pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as a barrier to success. Many pupils at the college study core subjects at GCSE level. Other pupils with weaker literacy skills or who speak English as an additional language achieve well in functional skills qualifications. Teachers are adept at ensuring all pupils make progress from their different starting points.

The curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Teachers have thought carefully about the smaller blocks of learning that are needed to help pupils know and understand more complex ideas. Teachers present topics in a logical order so that pupils are able to build on what they already know. Resources, such as textbooks, are used effectively in lessons to support learning. Pupils told inspectors how they feel well prepared for their upcoming examinations and about the progress they are making across the curriculum.

Teachers are highly effective at supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with weak literacy skills. Teachers quickly establish pupils' starting points and adapt the delivery of the curriculum appropriately. They help pupils learn to read through the effective teaching of phonics. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to revisit learning so that they become more secure in their phonics. They apply these skills well to spelling. Resources are well matched to the age and ability of pupils. As a result, pupils make strong progress in their reading and writing skills.

Teachers use various methods to check pupils' learning effectively. At the start of lessons, teachers recap previous topics and check that this knowledge is securely understood. Teachers use questioning effectively in lessons to check what pupils know and remember. They also use quizzes to help embed knowledge over time. Pupils value the verbal and written feedback they receive from their teachers in helping them to make progress.

The support for pupils with SEND is strong. All pupils at the college have an individual learning plan. These plans are appropriate and include support for both the academic and health needs of pupils. Teachers use pupils' learning plans to provide effective support across the curriculum. Staff are aware of the things that might cause difficulties in lessons and are skilled at providing the right help at the right time.

Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their lessons. They attend college regularly and show respect towards staff. Pupils sit calmly together in lessons and complete the work that is asked of them. On the odd occasion that pupils misbehave, leaders take swift and decisive action. Leaders do not allow poor behaviour to distract from learning.

Leaders provide a range of different opportunities for pupils' personal development. Recently, pupils have had relationships, sex and health education lessons. This has helped pupils to understand different types of relationships and appropriate sexual behaviour. Last year, pupils successfully completed a life skills course. This covered topics such as problem-solving and issues relating to personal finance. Leaders have also provided suitable careers information and guidance to pupils. A careers adviser has visited the college to complete an action plan with each pupil. This has enabled pupils to make decisions about whether they want to stay in education or move into employment when they leave the college. Leaders have also supported pupils effectively in arranging interviews and visits to local educational establishments. There are many different experiences for pupils as part of the college's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. However, it is not always clear why topics come in a particular order and how this links to assemblies.

The college is well led and managed. The proprietor body meets together regularly to discuss matters that arise. They have ensured that all the independent school standards continue to be met. Policies and procedures for the college are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose. Teachers are positive about the college. They enjoy working here and are proud to be members of the college community. Leaders have ensured that the college is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy is available to parents and carers on the college's website. It is compliant with the latest government guidance. Leaders have a strong

understanding of individual pupils and are alert to potential signs that they need help. Leaders have ensured that there are clear systems in place for recruiting new members of staff and that all appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out. All staff have received training on safeguarding and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders are aware of the appropriate agencies to contact should an incident arise, and act swiftly

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The college's PSHE programme is not as well structured and sequenced as it could be. Although pupils are given many different opportunities, it is not always clear why topics come in a particular order and how assemblies support the learning in these lessons. This means that pupils cannot build on previous learning as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that the college's PSHE programme is structured effectively so that pupils are able to remember more of what they have been taught.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	143418
DfE registration number	330/6032
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10205102
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Vivienne Lambert
Chair	Chester Morrison
Headteacher	Hermin McIntosh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£21,474 to £78,817
Telephone number	0121 5070904
Website	www.bicollege.org
Email address	info@bicollege.org
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 June 2017

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend the school have SEND.
- The school also caters for pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- At the time of this inspection, pupils on roll were aged between 17-20.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the head of college, the operations manager and the chair of the proprietor body. Inspectors also met with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, English for speakers of other languages, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the college's curriculum documentation, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their wider experiences of college.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, risk assessments, attendance information and behaviour logs.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors looked at the college's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff's training and the procedures that are in place to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered the suitability of the college building and leaders' work to reduce the risks that had been identified.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Maybank

Ofsted Inspector

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