

Mander Portman Woodward Independent College

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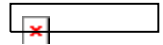
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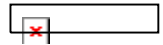
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Introduction and summary

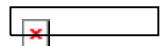


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the college's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

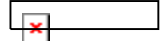
Information about the college



Mander Portman Woodward is a college for students aged 14 to 19. It is part of a group of independent colleges and was opened in 1980. The college is housed in a Georgian building in Edgbaston, a mile from the centre of Birmingham, although the college is preparing to move to improved accommodation nearby in January 2006. It is co-educational and accepts up to 120 students each year, preparing them for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary level (AS-level) and Year 2 advanced level (A2-level) courses. The college is non-selective but requires students to take an interview. At the time of the inspection there were 95 students on the roll, 10 of them aged 14 to 16. The aim of the college is to 'provide the most effective possible preparation for examinations.....based on intensive tuition in small groups'.

The majority of the students are of Asian origin, none have a statement of special education needs, and two receive assistance with English as a second language. Many of the leavers enter into higher education to study in the medical or clinical professions.

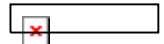
Summary of main findings



The college has a number of considerable strengths. It has established a pleasant and friendly atmosphere where students are encouraged to work hard, to which they respond well. Students are taught well, offered a broad range of courses, and are given very good support. They are helped in their career aspirations and achieve well. Management and administration are effective and the college is seeking to improve its provision.

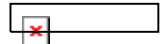
The move to a new site means that the college faces interesting and exciting challenges and gives it the opportunity to increase the breadth of education offered and to improve some aspects of resourcing.

What the College does well



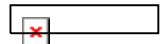
- it offers very good standards of pastoral care;
- it provides good quality teaching and students achieve well;
- it is well managed and runs smoothly; and
- it meets almost all the statutory requirements.

What the college must do in order to comply with the regulations



- provide appropriate plans and schemes of work for the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) to students of compulsory college age; and
- provide a programme of activities for students above compulsory school age appropriate to their needs.

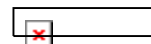
Next steps



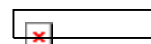
Whilst not required by the regulations, the college might wish to consider the following points for development:

- increase the range of teaching styles used;
- increase the range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, for all students;
- improve the range and quality of books for students' private study; and
- improve the provision for, and access to, facilities for information and communications technology (ICT).

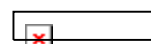
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the college



The quality of the curriculum



Overall, the quality of the curriculum is good. The college provides GCSE, AS- and A2-level courses in a wide range of subjects.

Students entering the college in Year 10 for a two-year GCSE course, study a compulsory core curriculum, which covers art, double science, English language and literature, ICT, mathematics, citizenship and PSHE. In addition, history and French are taken by Year 10 students and Spanish and sociology by Year 11 students. Games and physical education (PE) are compulsory for Years 10 and 11; the college uses a neighbouring school's facilities to provide these subjects, as it has no suitable facilities. A week of work experience is provided in the summer for Year 10 students. This is arranged by either individual students or the college.

PSHE is intended to be taught through subjects such as biology, citizenship, history and PE, but this is not formally planned and there is no scheme of work or monitoring to ensure that it is being delivered comprehensively or appropriately.

Students entering in Year 12 can also study a one-year GCSE programme.

Those students above the compulsory school age select from a full programme based on GCE, AS- and A2-level courses. They are guided carefully upon entry to the college in their individual choices of subjects, taking into consideration their personal interests and the university courses that they intend to study. Many students follow medical-related courses upon leaving the college, such as medicine, dentistry and pharmacy and this is reflected in the predominant demand for science-based subjects. However, a broad range of subjects is available. PE and games are not provided for these students.

There are no students with statements of special educational needs. The personal tutoring system provides a means to identify students who might be experiencing difficulties in learning. Currently, there are two students who have English as an additional language who receive specific support.

A curriculum policy outlines, amongst other aspects, the rationale and aims of the curriculum and means of quality assurance. Appropriate schemes of work are available, most showing clear continuity and progression; however, some lack sufficient guidance on teaching methodology and some need updating.

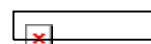
Career guidance for students is good. This is done through the personal tutor system, which assists students in making subject choices and in applying for admission to higher education. Extensive and up-to-date resources for careers are available.

There is limited provision for extra-curricular activities, an issue raised by parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire. The college has previously arranged some activities, but reports that

these have not been well attended. A joint venture with a local independent school in a dramatic production of Grease appears to have been very popular amongst students. Some students expressed an interest in the provision of sport for those above the compulsory school age.

The college prepares students well for adult life. They are expected to maintain self-motivation in learning and behaviour and there is clear responsibility placed on them to attend lessons. The personal tutorial system encourages students to discuss both academic and personal issues with staff and to engage in appropriate decision-making. The "Insight into Medicine" course, run at a local hospital by the college, provides interested students with an opportunity to experience working in a medical environment.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is good. About half the lessons seen were very good and the remainder satisfactory; there were no unsatisfactory lessons. The prime reason for this is that teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and use this well to set appropriate challenges for students. Good lessons are found in most subjects. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace, making good use of the lessons, which last for 85 minutes. Work is usually geared to the examination syllabus and emphasis is given to examination techniques. The style of teaching is usually didactic, with an aim of transmitting concepts and information, including a stress on technical language. Teachers' exposition is clear. Previous work is sometimes revisited to reinforce students' understanding. Class sizes are small, with a maximum of eight students and sometimes as few as one. On occasions, the very small numbers of students is not always used to best advantage, for example by setting individual programmes of work, although those receiving individual tuition clearly benefit. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students behave well in lessons. The calm atmosphere helps students to learn and make progress. Teachers use a limited range of resources, the usual medium being text books and worksheets. There is some use of ICT in teaching and learning, but the college has limited such resources. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good the teaching does not engage a sufficient number of students through the questioning used and students tend to be passive. In these circumstances, it is the female students who are disadvantaged.

There are good systems for the assessment of students' work. Both A-level and GCSE students are set timed assignments on a regular basis under examination conditions. This means that they, and the teachers, have a good understanding of their levels of attainment and what they need to do to make progress. The results of these tests are sometimes used at the beginning of lessons to make important teaching points.

In 2004, the results in the GCE A level courses were above those attained nationally. In both 2003 and 2002 they were similar to the national average.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

The college meets most but not all of the requirements.

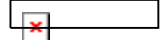
What does the college need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the college should:

- provide appropriate plans and schemes of work for the teaching of PSHE to students of compulsory school age (paragraph 1(2)(f)); and
- provide a programme of activities for students above compulsory school age

appropriate to their needs (paragraph 1(2)(h)(i)).

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students



There is satisfactory provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. The general ethos of the college is one of pastoral support combined with an expectation of student responsibility. In some lessons, students are encouraged to participate, so enhancing their self-confidence and self-esteem, through responding to questions or in group work. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, students enthusiastically and co-operatively engaged in reading through a play, the teacher appointing a student to be responsible for casting.

The student population at the college is ethnically diverse with the majority being of Muslim, Hindu or Sikh faiths. All students work well together. Citizenship in Years 10 and 11 includes topics on social and cultural diversity, social groups in Britain, multiculturalism, racial issues and conflict in the community. Religious studies AS- and A2-level includes topics on other religions, though this is an optional course. The college has contributed to a Diwali festival in the city where some students have run a stall for the college. Muslim students, of whom there has been a significant increase in the present year, are provided with the option of performing prayers during their private study period. Requests for muslim students to have a day off for Eid festivals are considered sympathetically. The needs of other religious communities are also met on an individual basis.

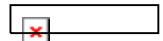
Students in Years 10 and 11 are given a broad knowledge of public institutions and services and an awareness of responsibilities to the community in their citizenship course. It also allows them to explore a range of moral issues, including tolerance, understanding and social responsibility, for example, through their involvement in a project on Fair Trade.

The college provides well for the moral development of students. The personal tutoring system and the college's strict expectations with respect to attendance and behaviour, encourage self-discipline in students. This also allows them to distinguish between right and wrong and consider the needs of others.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the students



The pastoral care of students is a strength of the college. Students feel that they are cared for. Much of this is due to an effective system of guidance and pastoral care administered through the personal tutor system where each student has access to one of four tutors. These tutors are all members of the senior staff, including the Principal, and therefore there is good contact with staff who can influence change. Students feel that they can approach their tutors with matters of concern and that these are acted upon. Much support is also given by subject tutors in giving students advice and support on academic matters. An appropriate range of rewards and sanctions is in place.

There is a comprehensive set of policies relating to students' welfare, including those on child protection, anti-bullying, fire safety and First Aid. A health and safety policy gives good guidance to

staff to ensure the well-being of students. Risk assessments of all areas of the college have been made. They are also made on field trips. Fire drills are carried out regularly and the results recorded.

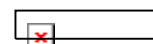
Students' attendance is satisfactory and they arrive at lessons punctually. Their attendance is monitored carefully using a system which records students' presence at every lesson. Unexplained absences are quickly reported to parents by telephone and comprehensive records are kept. The admissions and attendance registers meet the statutory requirements.

The present building is not totally suitable for students with disabilities but in the planning of the new accommodation due care has been taken to improve access for any such student. This meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The college is owned by Mander Portman Woodward, a limited company which is part of BPP Holdings who are involved in providing training and professional development. Management is through a board of Governors, comprising the Principals of the other colleges owned by Mander Portman Woodward and chaired by a managing director. Board meetings are held four times a year. The senior management team comprise the Principal and two Assistant Principals, the latter two dividing their roles between pastoral and academic matters. There is also an assistant head of GCSE who works to the Assistant Principal for pastoral care.

The college is well led and managed by the Principal who is ably supported by the senior management team. Developments are taking place, not least in the college's ambitious plans to move to a new site with improved accommodation and facilities. Policies and practices are in place to enable the college to run smoothly and effectively.

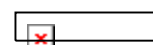
Checks with the Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) have been made on staff who joined the college in the last three years and all other staff have been checked against List 99. Appropriate references and checks are taken up on appointment.

There are sufficient teachers and support staff to allow the curriculum to be taught effectively. Teaching groups are small and teachers well qualified. Most teachers have undertaken appropriate recent in-service training. The college needs to ensure that all staff have had such training. Good support is given by science and ICT technicians and by office staff.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The present college premises are adequate for teaching and learning. The building is a converted

residential property in an area of offices and large residences. The college is in the process of converting larger premises, in the locality, with the intention to move to the new site in January 2006.

Teaching rooms are small but are suitable for the small groups. The science rooms are just adequate in size, and the biology laboratory is small for conducting practical work. All rooms are well decorated and have appropriate furniture. One room has an interactive whiteboard. This room can be booked by teachers. The premises are well maintained and clean.

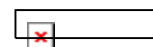
The study centre is used as an exam room and for private study, but is not particularly conducive for the latter. The books in the study centre are inadequate for many subjects and need up-dating and extending in range. There is a good provision of university prospectuses. Accommodation for students at lunchtime is limited; there is no common room but they have use of a conservatory and a small garden area. Sound insulation between rooms is, on the whole, adequate. Food is not served on the premises, most students leaving the site at lunchtime.

The new building, to be occupied in January 2006, is designed to remedy many of the limitations of the present building, with the installation of dedicated science laboratories, an ICT room and study centre, as well as a new student common room and better facilities for staff.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



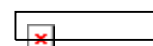
Communication with parents is good. They receive an attractive newsletter each term informing them of events and activities in the college. They also receive regular reports on their child's progress. These are comprehensive and of good quality, containing grades for effort, predicted examination grades, results of tests as well as teachers' comments and points for action by the student. Most comments by teachers are thorough and helpful.

The college produces a detailed and informative prospectus for parents. Further details of GCSE and A level courses and previous examination results are also available.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the college's procedures for handling complaints

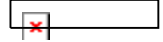


The college has produced a comprehensive complaints policy that clearly outlines the way that complaints are handled. This complaints policy is issued to parents upon the student's admission to the college and is also available to parents of prospective students.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

College details



Name of college:	Mander Portman Woodward Independent College
DfES ref number:	330/6079
Type of college:	Tutorial
Status:	Independent
Age range of students:	14 - 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 60, Girls 35, Total 95
Annual fees:	From £2,175 to £12,126 depending on the course.
Address of college:	38 Highfield Road Edgbaston Birmingham B15 3ED
E-mail address:	enq@birmingham.mpw.co.uk
Telephone number:	0121 4549637
Fax number:	0121 4546433
Headteacher:	Dominica Jewell
Proprietor:	MANDER PORTMAN WOODWARD LTD
Lead Inspector:	Dr Joe Tierney
Dates of inspection:	3 - 6 May 2005

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