

Mander Portman Woodward Independent College

Independent College

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DCSF Registration Number | 330/6079 |
| Unique Reference Number | 103587 |
| Inspection number | 332464 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | David Rzeznik HMI |

This inspection of the college was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the college's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the college

Mander Portman Woodward College was opened in 1980 and is part of a group of independent colleges founded in London in 1973. The colleges are owned by a private limited company and their work is overseen by a board of directors. The college moved to its current location in Edgbaston, Birmingham in February 2006. It is non-selective and there are 97 students on roll aged 14 to 19+ years. Around three quarters attend full-time and the rest part-time. Most students are of Asian origin, mainly from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. A significant minority are White British and a very small number are of Black heritage. The intake is mainly from Birmingham city with some students coming from surrounding towns and occasionally from overseas. No students have a statement of special educational needs. Most are above compulsory school age.

The college aims to 'provide the most effective possible preparation for specific examinations' primarily at GCSE intermediate and at advanced level. This is the college's second inspection. It was first inspected in May 2005.

Evaluation of the college

The quality of education is outstanding. This is because teaching and assessment are outstanding and the curriculum is effectively matched to students' needs and aspirations. As a result, students make excellent progress. Students are happy and enjoy their studies. Racial harmony is a key strength. Students' attitudes to learning are first rate and they appreciate the excellent pastoral support they receive. The college is well led by a very effective principal and she is ably supported by senior staff and others. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The weaknesses identified by the last inspection have been effectively addressed. The college meets all regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and enables students to achieve extremely well. A suitable written curriculum policy exists and it is supported by sound schemes of work, mainly based on national guidance or examination syllabi.

Students follow one of five curricular routes. They study either a full-time or one year GCSE intermediate programme of study; a two year AS/A level advanced course; one year intensive programme at AS/A level, or a 16 week AS/A level retake course. A real strength of the provision is its flexibility, with post-16 students being able to choose from a wide range of subject combinations and with the option of studying over one or two years.

The minority of full-time students in Year 10 undertake a two year GCSE course. The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all of the required areas of learning. Students also have the opportunity to study French or German and either English literature or media studies. Physical education is compulsory and students do this at a local school, as the college does not have appropriate facilities or sufficient outdoor space. Some students undertake a one year GCSE programme, usually comprising five subjects, because they want to achieve higher grades, especially in English, mathematics and science. The last inspection identified a lack of appropriate plans and schemes of work for the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) for those of compulsory school age. The leadership has effectively addressed these weaknesses.

Post-16 students are happy with the advice they receive prior to starting courses and they say that provision is well matched to their needs and aspirations. A suitable range of enrichment activities is provided, including field trips and work experience. The last inspection recommended that a better programme of enrichment activities was required for students above compulsory school age. This shortcoming has been rectified. For example, biology students go on field trips, and English and media study students visit local museums and national theatres. Careers guidance is good and students say the advice they receive about university entrance is excellent. The college has invested heavily in computer technology and has improved the range and access to information and communications technology (ICT). Computers are used well in lessons and for private study.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Planning is based on a thorough knowledge of students' attainment and their strengths and weaknesses. Timed assessments are undertaken in each subject each week. They test students' understanding, knowledge and skills of the work recently done. Teachers rigorously mark the tests, pinpointing students' strengths and what must be improved. The information gained is used effectively to plan work that is consistently challenging. Students are given at least two homework tasks each week in each subject. The tasks are relevant and productive and are rigorously assessed. Students say that the feedback given is very helpful in moving their learning forward. They appreciate being given past examination questions to answer and are effectively taught the necessary techniques to cope with external examinations. One student summed up the views of many when he said, in a positive way, 'teachers here are always on your case'. Students welcome being stretched and do not feel pressurised by on-going assessment.

Teaching is outstanding because teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are skilful in imparting information in a clear, straightforward way. They also understand the examination system and how to effectively prepare students for examinations and any entrance requirements for university. Relationships between staff and students and between students themselves are excellent. Because classes are small students get very effective one-to-one support matched to their specific needs. A range of effective teaching methods and resources are used to stimulate students' interest and enjoyment. This aspect is an area of improvement since the last inspection. The pace of learning is brisk and learning moves along at a cracking pace. Students welcome demanding and challenging activities and say that the move to one hour lessons has increased their concentration and motivation levels. Where teaching is less effective it is mainly because there is too much exposition and students remain too passive, or the pace of learning is too quick or does not build well enough on students' prior learning. The tracking of students' attainment and progress is excellent and good systems are in place to intervene if there are signs that students are falling behind. Students make outstanding progress in their learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students say they enjoy college life as demonstrated in their good attendance. The college is very successful in developing students' self-confidence and self-esteem so they can meet the challenges of further education.

Students' behaviour is outstanding. Their attitude to learning is first rate and this is a major factor in their success. Students from different backgrounds mix well and a real sense of racial harmony pervades the college. Students make a positive contribution to the wider community by raising money for various charities and a few work voluntarily in a local hospital. Students say they would like to have more of a say in decision making within the college. Inspectors agree. Citizenship and PSHE work ensures students are well informed about British society and its institutions. Inspectors saw some excellent work in a Year 11 lesson on contemporary issues, such as racism and its impact, which adds to students' understanding about cultural and religious diversity.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Pastoral support is excellent. Students speak highly of the personal tutor system, where they meet regularly with a member of staff to discuss academic or personal matters. Students say that tutors listen to the things they want to talk about and any concerns they might have are

effectively resolved. They also welcome the 'drop in' workshops that provide additional one-to-one support and guidance in each subject.

All essential policies are in place and they are effectively implemented. All staff have received regular training to fulfil their child protection responsibilities. A healthy lifestyle is promoted, particularly through work in PSHE and science, and students adopt safe practices when working in science laboratories. However, a significant number of parents and students say the college could do more to encourage all students to keep healthy and get regular exercise, particularly over 16. Inspectors agree.

The admission and attendance registers are kept electronically and in accordance with the regulations. A good feature is the monitoring of students' attendance at the start of every lesson so any non-attendance or poor punctuality is quickly pinpointed and effectively dealt with. The disability policy is clear and contains a plan of action to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All of the required employment and staff vetting procedures are carried out prior to staff being appointed, to confirm their suitability to work with children. All members of the board of directors have been appropriately vetted. A single central register is kept, which contains all of the necessary information.

College's premises and accommodation

The college is located in two Victorian houses that have been effectively refurbished for educational use. Internally the premises and accommodation are of a very good standard and enable effective learning. Outside recreational space is limited but it is adequate for the number on roll. Classrooms are of an appropriate size and there is good specialist accommodation for science and ICT. Teaching and communal areas are in good decorative order and are kept in a very clean and tidy condition.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The prospectus has very recently been updated and contains all of the required information. The college website contains very useful information which students and parents can access using secure passwords. Parents say they like being able to monitor how well their child is progressing in tests and homework tasks and to check their attendance. Parents receive good quality reports five times a year and they too are available on the website. Reports clearly identify the attainment, progress and effort being made in the subjects taught.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The college meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the college could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the college might wish to consider the following point for development:

- provide further opportunities for students to keep healthy and get regular exercise, particularly for those above compulsory school age.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

| | | | |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education | ✓ | | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students | | ✓ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs | ✓ | | | |
| How well students make progress in their learning | ✓ | | | |

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | ✓ | | |
| The behaviour of students | ✓ | | | |

Welfare, health and safety of students

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of students | ✓ | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|

College details

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------|-----------|
| Name of college | Mander Portman Woodward Independent College | | |
| DCSF number | 330/6079 | | |
| Unique reference number | 103587 | | |
| Type of college | Fifth and Sixth Form | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date college opened | 1980 | | |
| Age range of students | 14–19+ years | | |
| Gender of students | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time students) | Boys: 43 | Girls: 28 | Total: 71 |
| Number on roll (part-time students) | Boys: 11 | Girls: 15 | Total: 26 |
| Number of students with a statement of special educational need | Boys: 0 | Girls: 0 | Total: 0 |
| Number of students who are looked after | Boys: 0 | Girls: 0 | Total: 0 |
| Annual fees (day students) | £12,636 | | |
| Address of college | 17–18 Greenfield Crescent Edgbaston Birmingham B15 3AU | | |
| Telephone number | 0121 4549637 | | |
| Fax number | 0121 4546433 | | |
| Email address | eng@birmingham.mpw.co.uk | | |
| Principal | Dominica Jewell | | |
| Proprietor | Mander Portman Woodward Ltd - part of BPP Holdings PLC | | |
| Reporting inspector | David Rzeznik HMI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 13–14 January 2009 | | |