



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Bales College

March 2020



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School's Details

College	Bales College			
DfE number	213/6384			
Address	Bales College 2 Kilburn Lane London W10 4AA			
Telephone number	020 8960 5899			
Email address	info@balescollege.co.uk			
Principal	Mr William Moore			
Proprietor	Mr William Moore			
Age range	11 to 20			
Number of pupils on roll	105			
	Seniors	<i>77</i>	Sixth Form	<i>28</i>
Inspection dates	3 to 5 March 2020			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Bales College is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 11 and 20 years. The school is owned and governed by the proprietor, who is also its principal. It was founded in 1966 as the Modern Tutorial College and moved to its present site in 1972.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school values the individual's potential and aims to enable pupils to achieve academic success through developing their own independent working patterns within a supportive, orderly and disciplined environment. The core values of respect, humour, energy and perseverance drive the school's vision.

About the pupils

- 1.3 The majority of pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds within the local area. Approximately one fifth of the pupils are foreign nationals from a variety of countries. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is broadly average compared to those taking the same test nationally and the ability of sixth-form pupils is below average. The school has identified five pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with some receiving additional specialist help. There is one pupil in the school with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for seven pupils, whose needs are supported by one-to-one and small group lessons. Pupils identified by the school as the more able are provided with additional activities within lessons.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#)

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 Pupils take GCSE and A-level examinations in their final year at the school. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages.
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.5 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.6 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.8 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.10 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.11 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.13 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.14 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.15 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.16 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.17 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.18 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is sound.
- Pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning and are keen to succeed.
 - Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are sound across all areas of the curriculum.
 - Older pupils display good higher order thinking skills when they are able to draw on a wide range of resources.
 - Pupils are not able to make best use of technology to enhance their learning.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- Pupil's notable tolerance and respect for different cultures are promoted by the diversity within the school and are in line with the school's aims.
 - Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is strong.
 - Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and stay healthy.
 - Links to the local community and wider charities are not fully appreciated by all pupils.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
- Improve pupils' use of technology to enhance their learning and give them access to a wider range of resources.
 - Enable pupils to contribute more fully to the life of the local community.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is sound.
- 3.5 Pupils throughout the school have a positive attitude towards their learning and are keen to succeed. Pupils embrace opportunities to contribute in lessons and, when given the opportunity to work collaboratively, they respond positively. For example, in a chemistry lesson, pupils worked together to identify a gas produced by a chemical reaction. Pupils' attitudes are particularly strong in lessons where they are presented with a variety of approaches which support their individual learning styles. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) respond well to the specialist support they receive. In sixth form mathematics, more able pupils take responsibility for tackling more challenging questions. However, pupils do not always take responsibility for their learning either because they are not given the opportunity or because they rely on teachers to prompt them or provide regular reminders.
- 3.6 Pupils have good numeracy skills. Their proficiency is demonstrated not just in mathematics but across the curriculum. In interviews, pupils spoke about their enjoyment of mathematics and their written work shows notable progress and understanding. For example, the written work of pupils in Year 8 showed they can handle algebraic equations successfully. In geography, younger pupils used graphs to illustrate world populations and also completed work on 4 and 6 figure grid references. GCSE pupils use formulas accurately in science subjects; A-level pupils confidently apply their skills to solve equations in chemistry and to calculate compound interest in economics.

- 3.7 Pupils are confident communicators. In written work based on *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, pupils demonstrated sound critical thinking skills when considering the rights and wrongs of the characters' actions. During form time, pupils articulated clearly their thoughts and knowledge of the world in a discussion on a news item about climate change. This daily activity has been introduced by the school leadership to ensure pupils are aware of, and can communicate confidently, about global issues. All pupils are given the opportunity to take part in leading the weekly school assembly. During the inspection, Year 7 and 8 pupils led an assembly on aspirations, speaking with clarity and confidence in front of their peers. Pupils with EAL learn rapidly how to adapt to the nuances of the English language as a result of the individualised programme offered by the school.
- 3.8 Pupils have very limited opportunities to demonstrate skills in the use of technology. The school leadership has identified this as an area for development. In a few lessons, pupils were shown presentations, but the technology was not always reliable. Some pupils described themselves as visual learners and felt they would benefit from greater use of technology. Pupils have gained some knowledge of the use of technology from their experiences outside school.
- 3.9 The number of pupils taking GCSE or A level examinations is too small to enable comparisons to be made with national data. Many pupils join the school to start an A level course or to re-sit GCSEs. The small size of the school and the family atmosphere enable staff to know the pupils well and to support them individually. As a result, pupils make good progress when lessons are well-structured and challenging. Following the pattern of regular assessment, pupils discuss their results with their teachers, reflect on their progress and set personal targets. Pupils joining the school with EAL make good progress in their understanding of English as a result of the dedicated support they receive when they arrive in the school.
- 3.10 The quality of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are sound, across the curriculum. Linguistics skills of a high standard were in evidence with extremely descriptive language, for example when pupils described feelings of grief and loss from a poem being studied in English. Their written work showed good progression over time in developing concepts, and in many subjects the quantity of work completed was good. Pupils apply their prior learning to new situations confidently, as seen in science and mathematics. In a history lesson, pupils used the knowledge gained in religious education (RE) to inform their decision-making task on religious changes during the Elizabethan era. Pupils reflect on how well they are achieving and how best to improve when marking and feedback giving them guidance for their future progress. Pupils' progress is less secure when lessons are mainly led by the teacher or where classroom management is less effective.
- 3.11 Pupils enjoy participating in the academic and extra-curricular activities available. They spoke with enthusiasm about the regular football, basketball and netball matches against local schools. A few pupils represent the school in other sports including representing the local authority in a cross-country regional final. Older pupils successfully entered a national writing competition in 2019, writing 100-word short stories on the theme Contamination and a significant number were selected for publication. Pupils spoke of their pride in receiving recognition of their achievements at the school's annual prizegiving. Visits to enhance pupils' learning are made to art galleries, Kew gardens and workshops at the Institute of Physics. The majority of sixth-form leavers gain entry to their first-choice university.

- 3.12 Pupils display a level of study skills appropriate for their age. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils demonstrated higher order thinking skills when discussing their thoughts on suffering and the effects of believing in God. A range of views were shared, and the pupils were able to look at each one separately to synthesise their thoughts. In written work, pupils used a variety of sources successfully to determine whether King John was a good, bad or just unlucky king, understanding that historians differ in how they portray a king. In GCSE English, pupils analysed an article on Brian Keenan regarding his time as a hostage in Beirut. They identified and discussed the feelings of someone who is in captivity over a long period of time. Sixth form pupils used their prior learning to hypothesise what would happen when a particular chemical was added to a solution. When teachers foster the application of intellectual processes, pupils respond positively. However, this is inconsistent across the school.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages appreciate the diversity in the school and naturally show respect for each other, reflecting strongly the school's aim of respect. Pupils are proud of being part of the school and have a strong sense of loyalty to it. The small size of the school and its family feel enable pupils to work together with others of different nationalities, backgrounds, beliefs and ages. Weekly assemblies are held in the adjacent church which all pupils attend. In discussion, pupils showed respect for differing views on topics such as whether tennis is only for rich people and thus not accessible to everyone. The school celebrates its multicultural environment and successfully encourages its pupils to be proud of their heritage and tolerant of those who are different. Most pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that the school encourages them to tolerate and respect other people. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire also agreed that the school actively promotes these qualities.
- 3.15 Pupils have good self-understanding. Younger pupils know how well they are progressing and how they can improve their learning as a result of the advice and encouragement from their teachers. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has enabled younger pupils to develop an excellent understanding of the definition of resilience, and pupils described how this has helped them when faced with difficulties. Older pupils also spoke about how discussions in form time developed their self-awareness and gave them confidence to overcome adversity. They appreciate the role played by form tutors in delivering the PSHE programme with sensitivity. Sixth form pupils value the support and encouragement of their teachers as they prepare for life beyond school, including the confidence to negotiate the intricacies of student finance.
- 3.16 Pupils feel very well prepared to make decisions regarding their future. Teachers challenge pupils in discussion to formulate their own opinions and recognise their strengths before considering the options available to them. When choosing GCSE or A level subjects, pupils attend a trial lesson before committing to a particular course, thus helping them make informed choices. Sixth form pupils appreciate the advice they receive when considering university courses and feel confident to make positive decisions about their future. Senior pupils are conscious that they are role models for younger pupils, and they make decisions about how they behave around school.
- 3.17 Pupils show a well-developed ability to reflect on matters of faith and religion. In the weekly assemblies, pupils think spiritually rather than materialistically as they reflect on the half termly theme. During the inspection, a group of younger pupils spoke about the aspirations of notable people such as Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. In an RE lesson, pupils articulated a spiritual point of view when discussing the topic of suffering. In interviews, pupils spoke about the commitment of the school community to valuing and tolerating all faiths. In a GCSE English lesson, pupils empathised that when Andre Agassi was struggling mentally while playing competitive tennis, winning and earning money were less important than his mental state.

- 3.18 Pupils can distinguish between right and wrong and this is reflected in the very good behaviour seen around the school. Pupils are polite to each other, and older pupils were often observed helping younger pupils. This was particularly evident when a group of Year 9 pupils challenged younger pupils about their behaviour towards others. The school creates an environment in which pupils take responsibility for their actions and respect one another. In a discussion about climate change, pupils spoke knowledgeably about the responsibilities of society and the need for global action. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and understand and respect the high standards set by the school. Almost all pupils have a strong sense of morality which is developed through an effective PSHE programme and the very good relationships between pupils and their teachers. On the few occasions where behaviour in class fell below the standard expected, this was due to less effective classroom management strategies.
- 3.19 Pupils collaborate with one another very productively in many aspects of school life. During a basketball lesson, pupils worked effectively with others to achieve both good teamwork and success. When the team was not playing well, they were able to regroup and assess together how to improve. In a French lesson, pupils worked very well in small groups sharing learning materials and contributing appropriately. The ethos of the school fosters the positive relationships seen between the different age groups. Pupils worked together to produce the Christmas celebration of drama, readings and poetry.
- 3.20 In their interactions across the school community, pupils demonstrate care and consideration for each other. Older pupils contribute to the life of the school by taking responsibility for the example they set to younger members of the school community. Pupils have a good awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves through PSHE lessons and topics addressed in assemblies. They contribute to raising funds for charities, but some pupils are not always clear which charities they are supporting. Although the school has links with the neighbouring church, many pupils were unable to give examples of these or of the school's involvement in the local community.
- 3.21 Across the school, pupils show considerable understanding of how to stay safe and the importance of a healthy lifestyle, eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. Pupils understand that physical activity is important in life and participated enthusiastically throughout the basketball lesson. School lunches consist of varied and healthy options and pupils identified the new salad options as improving their diet. Written work showed evidence that pupils have a strong insight into the effects of eating disorders and maintaining a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet. Sixth form pupils understand that healthy eating has an impact on academic performance. Through articles in the weekly newsletter, the senior leadership regularly reminds parents to provide healthy snacks for their children. Pupils identified members of staff they can turn to if they have any mental health concerns. The comprehensive PSHE programme educates the pupils in how to keep themselves safe online and in conversations pupils commented that they feel safe in school.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor and attended form meetings and assemblies. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Fiona McGill	Reporting inspector
Mr Norman Patterson	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, ISA school)
Mr Ian Daniels	Team inspector (Principal, ISA school)