

Birmingham Independent College

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

Inspection dates

13–15 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has created a culture of high expectations and mutual respect and care. As a result, pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding.
- Staff are well prepared to challenge stereotypes and have open discussions about political, social and religious issues.
- All staff encourage pupils to have high aspirations. Pupils aim to go on to access a wide range of further education and careers.
- Leaders have developed a citizenship curriculum that actively and effectively promotes fundamental British values.
- The proprietor and board have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The curriculum is flexible, broad and balanced. As a result, most of the pupils of all abilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders make sure that they communicate frequently with parents and carers. They work with parents and carers to help them to develop the work of the school, at home.
- The proprietor and leaders generally have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, leaders do not have a strong enough overview of the impact of the science and creative arts curriculum in developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in these subjects.
- Teaching and learning is good. Pupils are engaged in their learning and doing well in a range of subjects. However, a small number of teachers do not make sure that pupils who have limited English make the progress of which they are capable.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers consistently meet the needs of learners who have limited English language skills, by:
 - evaluating the impact of recent training to improve teachers' skills in this area
 - taking swift action to support teachers who still need to develop their skills.
- Improve the leadership of the curriculum by fully evaluating the impact of the science and creative arts curriculum on pupils' skills and knowledge in these areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor has ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have appropriate training related to their needs. Training is managed to make sure that it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, all staff recently had a formal observation that was filmed. The head of teaching and learning spent time with each member of staff talking through their practice, carefully identifying areas for development and enabling staff to reflect on their work. Teachers appreciated this feedback and as a result teaching has improved. However, in a small number of lessons there are some remaining weaknesses relating to teaching pupils who are new to speaking English.
- Leaders assess pupils' skills and knowledge when they enter the school. Leaders use this information to produce an 'individual learning plan' which they use to track a pupil's progress. Teachers accurately assess pupils' English language skills, their knowledge of life in modern Britain, their health and well-being and wider prior attainment. This broad and rounded baseline enables teachers to meet pupils' needs effectively.
- Leaders have developed an appropriate and comprehensive way of tracking pupils' progress through termly reviews. At each review point, pupils' progress in English language and their journey towards gaining academic qualifications is evaluated against the starting points established when they entered the school. This means that leaders have a strong grasp of each pupil's progress and can intervene when necessary.
- Leaders share pupils' progress reviews with parents in a way that is simple and easy to understand. This means that at a glance, parents can see how well their child is doing in all areas of school life. Parents told the inspector that they value this information.
- Through assemblies, citizenship lessons and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education time, teachers take regular opportunities to further pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They focus on a wide range of issues in an engaging way.
- The core curriculum offers extensive support for pupils' English language needs and a variety of subjects which enable pupils to go on to study at further education providers. Where pupils need less support, they have a wide and varied curriculum at a level that enables them to go on to Level 3 courses. The curriculum is flexible enough to cater for the wide range of abilities in the school.
- Leaders carefully design extra-curricular activities so that they support pupils' development and future career aspirations. For example, recent trips to major local manufacturing firms, local events and local architecture encourage pupils to explore the locality while strengthening their confidence on public transport.
- Leaders actively and effectively promote fundamental British values. For example in the recent election, pupils studied a variety of party political broadcasts, discussed them and staged their own election. Pupils have a good understanding of the law, equalities and personal liberty.
- Pupils particularly value their sports curriculum. They enjoy the variety of sports on offer

and the opportunity to develop their fitness and skills.

- Most pupils spend a short time in the school. Leaders design the curriculum to meet pupils' immediate language learning needs while still allowing them opportunities to explore other subjects, including history, religious studies, politics and geography. Staff do this through the PSHE and citizenship curriculum. Teachers also find a variety of ways of incorporating the creative arts and science into their lessons, which pupils value. However, pupils do not have specific lessons in which to study science and the creative arts. Leaders have not evaluated the impact of this arrangement on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in these subjects.

Governance

- The proprietor has appointed a board which oversees all functions of the school. This body comprises of the proprietor, headteacher and one other person. This body effectively scrutinises information about pupils' progress, and checks on how leaders identify and address any safeguarding concerns. They have a strong impact on the success of the school. They know its core aims and make sure that the school meets them.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including the safeguarding policy, are fit for purpose and meet current government requirements. Records are detailed and of high quality.
- Staff receive appropriate and frequent safeguarding and child protection training. The proprietor has ensured that the safeguarding policy is available to parents on the school's website. Staff are vigilant and have a strong understanding of the risks facing the pupils in the school. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in making sure pupils are safe and know how to stay safe from the risks of, for example, radicalisation and extremism. They incorporate lessons into various areas of the curriculum to help pupils keep safe from a range of risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have established high expectations and respect among pupils and between teachers and pupils. This enables teachers to focus closely on meeting pupils' needs so that they make good progress. Small class sizes mean that pupils get high levels of support with their work. As a consequence, most pupils make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects.
- Teachers have a high level of skill in teaching English to pupils who speak English as an additional language and are also highly skilled in teaching their specific subjects to these pupils. This means that pupils make swift gains in their learning.
- Leaders and staff give a high priority to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Classrooms and lessons are rich with language. Pupils are encouraged to use their new language skills frequently, often in challenging situations. For example, during the inspection the inspector observed two presentations given by pupils to the whole school,

by pupils with just a few months' language learning. These presentations take place frequently and help to develop pupils' spoken language effectively. Teachers facilitate these presentations very carefully and train pupils well to give each other very constructive feedback on their skills and areas for improvement.

- Teachers carefully match learning tasks to pupils' stage of development. This means that tasks are accessible, but challenging, and help pupils make good progress from their starting points. For example, in some lessons small-group work happens alongside independent work and one-to-one support. Pupils' positive behaviour and mature attitudes towards their learning enables this to happen effectively.
- Teachers place a strong emphasis on pupils' self-assessment and reflection. As pupils' language skills develop, they become more able to do this well. For example, the inspector saw pupils reflecting on their termly assessments and identifying what they need to do to improve further. Pupils made perceptive comments and developed constructive targets for themselves.
- Pupils view homework and catch-up interventions positively. This is because the activities relate closely to the work in class and subsequent assessments. As a result, homework and catch-up tasks have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Leaders make sure that all pupils have extra support when they need it.
- A small number of teachers do not explain the lesson content well enough so that pupils with limited English language skills can understand the work. As a result, pupils become confused and their progress slows. Leaders are well aware of this and have provided appropriate training. For most staff this training has been effective. Leaders acknowledge that they need to do more work on this.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils who have weak English language skills quickly learn the language and, as they do so, their self-confidence increases rapidly. The inspector observed all pupils practising their English skills diligently and expressing themselves with increasing confidence.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that bullying never happens in their school. Pupils said that if it happened, they would know who to speak to and are confident that staff would resolve any issues quickly and effectively. Pupils said that the small nature of the school means that they get on with one another very well and support each other effectively. The inspector agrees. The support that pupils give to one another in lessons and around the school enables them to grow in confidence and to feel safe to ask or answer questions in class.
- Pupils' developing and improving spoken language skills enable them to discuss and debate ideas and issues in a highly sophisticated way. Pupils listen attentively and demonstrate respect and acceptance of others' views, values and beliefs.
- Pupils receive frequent suitable and effective impartial careers information, advice and guidance. As a result, all of the pupils leaving the school secure a place at a further education institution or in employment and training.

- Pupils have a clear understanding of British values and of the role they play in upholding and promoting these values in society. For example, pupils demonstrate an acceptance of others' differences and an ability to argue their point of view in a calm, succinct and compelling way.
- Pupils who have had recent trauma or who have lost family members before arriving at the school make exceptional progress in their personal development. Leaders work closely with carers and support workers to meet pupils' personal, social and academic needs.
- Staff provide experiences that help pupils settle into the local area. These include cultural visits, trips on public transport, and other activities which help pupils appreciate the rich variety of things that the local area has to offer. Pupils appreciate these experiences because they prepare them effectively for life after school.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe and healthy. They are able to identify and take suitable action against potential risks such as those posed online or by leading unhealthy lifestyles.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are highly respectful of one another and staff. This is because staff insist on extremely high standards of behaviour and personal conduct. They model this behaviour themselves and address any small issues immediately.
- Most pupils have attendance rates that are above the national average. A few pupils have weaker attendance and leaders work closely with parents and carers to improve these pupils' attendance.
- Pupils wear their uniforms smartly and are sensible and mature around the school site. In lessons they work with determination both independently and in small groups. Pupils say, and inspection evidence shows, that disruption in classrooms is rare. Logs of pupils' behaviour show that on the very rare occasions that pupils do not meet the school's high expectations, staff deal with the issue quickly and effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils join the school for a short period of time during Year 11. During this time they make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects. The main focus for these pupils is the swift development of English language skills, and the qualifications that they need to go on to secure their next steps in education or employment and training. Pupils who attend the school for longer also make good progress. For these pupils, leaders focus on a wider curriculum, and gaining qualifications leading to Level 2 or Level 3 course offers.
- Some pupils arrive in school the two or three months preceding their Year 11 examinations. These pupils make swift progress and gain the skills and attributes needed to gain places on courses in further education.
- Pupils take a range of qualifications at entry level and Level 1. They pass the vast majority of these courses because teachers prepare them well and enter them wisely for the qualifications. This means that all pupils leave the school with a range of qualifications

that represent good progress from their starting points. For example, recently, all pupils took a course in British Sign Language.

- Leaders match the curriculum well to the needs of the most able pupils. They take GCSE qualifications and leaders provide one-to-one support for their studies to ensure that they understand more complex work. The work in pupils' books shows that they are making good progress from their starting points.
- Last year, all pupils who left at the end of Year 11 gained a further education place and took it up. This year, because of the close support that teachers give for careers and next steps, all pupils who are leaving have appropriate destinations to go to. The range of these destinations and the variety of courses reflect the extensive work that leaders do to make pupils aware of the opportunities available to them and the qualifications that they will need to be successful.
- Many pupils join the school with limited confidence and communication skills. By the time they leave school, pupils are confident and are able to converse with their peers well. This is primarily due to the appropriate curriculum and the quality of teaching pupils receive. Pupils develop the confidence to critique each other's work during their time in the school. This is because teachers focus on this skill regularly.
- Leaders support children looked after by the local authority effectively. Staff achieve this through effective teaching and extra tuition to enable pupils to make good progress and begin to catch up with their peers. Some of these pupils have complex personal and social needs, and leaders spend the funding they receive wisely on things that will directly support their progress such as language software and access to computers at home.

School details

Unique reference number	143418
DfE registration number	330/6032
Inspection number	10033591

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

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mrs Vivienne Lambert-Blackwood
Chair	Mr Chester Morrison
Headteacher	Hermin McIntosh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,700
Telephone number	0121 5070904
Website	www.bicollege.org
Email address	info@bicollege.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This was the first inspection since the school opened in 2015.
- The school caters for pupils who have recently arrived in the area or recently arrived in the country. It specialises in the rapid teaching of English to those who have little or no English language skills. The majority of pupils are children looked after.
- Most pupils join the school at times other than at the start of the academic year.
- Presently, the school only has pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons, evaluated samples of pupils' work, and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school between lessons, at breaktimes and at lunchtime.
- The inspector spoke with pupils formally and informally in lessons and around the school. Meetings were held with the proprietor, the proprietorial body, headteacher, and teacher in charge of teaching and learning.
- The inspector evaluated the views of parents, carers and support workers through meetings with parents/carers, a meeting with a support worker, responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and letters from parents.
- Compliance with the independent school standards was checked through scrutiny of a wide range of documents, including those on safeguarding, a check of the school and the wider site, and health and safety arrangements.
- A visit was made to the sports centre where pupils attend weekly physical education classes. Checks were made on the sports centre's facilities and health and safety arrangements and records.

Inspection team

Dan Owen, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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