



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BOLTON SCHOOL BOYS' DIVISION**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Bolton School Boys' Division

Full Name of School	<b>Bolton School Boys' Division</b>		
DfE Number	<b>350/6014</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>526618</b>		
Address	<b>Bolton School Boys' Division Chorley New Road Bolton Lancashire BL1 4PA</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01204 840201</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01204 849477</b>		
Email Address	<b>seniorboys@boltonschool.org</b>		
Head	<b>Mr Philip Britton MBE</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Michael Griffiths</b>		
Age Range	<b>7 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1109</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys</b>		
Numbers by Age	<b>7-11:</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>11-18: 914</b>
Inspection dates	<b>23 Nov 2010 to 24 Nov 2010</b>		

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Bolton School traces its history to 1516. Almost 400 years later the foundation drew together on the current site the boys' and girls' divisions as equal partners. Each division has its own junior school for pupils aged seven to eleven, and they share an infants' school for children below the age of seven. The governors serve the whole foundation. The school aims to realise the potential of each pupil, so that he leaves the school self-confident and equipped with knowledge, skills and attributes that allow him to lead a happy and fulfilled life, and to make a difference for good in the wider community.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection in October 2006, the school has reorganised the structure of its senior management, and reformed the teaching day to embrace longer lessons and increase the range of subjects available to pupils. It has extended its provision of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), and increased its provision for teaching pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) or learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and those who are recognised as gifted and talented. The governors have overseen much new building work, including an extension to the junior school, and they have improved existing facilities, for example in science, drama and technology. Provision of information and communications technology (ICT) has been significantly expanded. Planning is complete for a new sixth-form centre for boys and girls.
- 1.3 The school currently has 914 pupils in the senior school and 195 in the junior school, drawn from a large area around Bolton. Admission to each part of the school is by written assessment in English and mathematics, and by measurement of both verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills. Pupils join the sixth form on the basis of their achievement in the GCSE examinations and at interview. An 'open door' bursary scheme provides means-tested financial assistance at the points of entry to the school. In total, 152 pupils currently receive some financial support.
- 1.4 Standardised national assessment shows that the average ability of pupils in the junior school is above the national average, and in the senior school it is well above the national average. Three pupils have statements of SEN, and the school further identifies twenty-eight as having LDD, six in the junior school and twenty-two in the senior. None is withdrawn from regular lessons. The range of cultural and economic backgrounds among the pupils is wide, and reflective of the local community. One pupil receives support within the school for having English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' overall achievements and of their learning, attitudes and skills is excellent. The school is highly successful in meeting its aim to realise the full potential of each pupil, by fostering his knowledge and understanding, developing his skills and equipping him to engage generously in the wider community. At all stages, pupils excel in the high levels of their knowledge and understanding, their successful participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities, and their keen social skills of listening and speaking, and caring.
- 2.2 The pupils' progress is good, above the average of pupils of similar ability, and this is sustained throughout the school. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with statements of SEN, or with LDD, and those with EAL, achieve well. Performance in public examinations is outstanding. Both at GCSE and at A level, pupils achieve far above the national average of boys in all maintained schools and above that of boys in maintained selective schools. Over the last three years nearly three-quarters of grades awarded at GCSE and more than half at A level were either A\* or A. Pupils' achievements in music and in sport are strong. Admission to higher education is immensely successful.
- 2.3 The pupils display high levels of enthusiasm in all aspects of their learning. They contribute keenly in lessons, whilst also being receptive to the comments, questions and responses of their peers. They work well individually and in groups. They read widely and carefully, and they write fluently and precisely. They are highly creative and use ICT and mathematical skills freely. They enjoy the wide, and recently expanded, academic curriculum. They engage fully in the vast breadth and variety of extra-curricular activities that take place each day and include school visits to its outdoor learning centre in the Lake District.
- 2.4 The pupils benefit from much excellent teaching. The best lessons ensure that all pupils are actively engaged and challenged, and that their learning is exciting and personalised. In many lessons, pupils have the freedom to develop their own ideas and judgements and much written work is excellent. This is not as evident in the lower years, where the completion of routine worksheets dulls this. Marking is generally thorough and informative, showing clear direction for improvement through constructive comment and suggestion. Those pupils who are gifted and talented, and those who have statements of SEN, or LDD, or with EAL, benefit strongly from directed teaching within lessons and outside them.

## **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.5 In all aspects, the quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. The pupils are friendly, sensitive to the needs of each other, confident, courteous and tolerant. They enjoy the independence and responsibility given to them by their school, and they use this most effectively to the benefit of each other and of the wider community. The pupils are self-confident as well as caring. Their spiritual awareness is strong. They have a clear and well-developed understanding of the diversity of faiths in contemporary society, and they are mutually tolerant of difference. They have a keen aesthetic awareness and they are sensitive to beauty in the arts.
- 2.6 The pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a keen understanding of moral issues and of fairness to each other. The pupils greatly value the comprehensive PSHCE programme provided by the school. They recognise its importance to their personal growth. They also develop an effective understanding of modern life and government, they explore moral issues thoughtfully and they distinguish right from wrong clearly. They understand the function of public institutions and the role of law. They also generously raise considerable funds for those in need, locally, nationally and abroad.
- 2.7 The social development of the pupils is excellent. They relate positively and openly to each other and to adults. They hold positions of responsibility with sensitivity and commitment, and they serve conscientiously on school councils. Their personal behaviour is excellent. The mutual respect that is evident between pupil and teacher ensures that disciplinary issues are dealt with efficiently and successfully. Senior pupils give substantial amounts of time to community service.
- 2.8 The quality of pupils' cultural awareness is excellent. They have a good understanding of their own culture and those of others. They show a clear interest in diversity. Harmony between pupils of different cultures within the school is widely evident. The pupils' performance and appreciation of the arts are strong throughout, especially in music, in drama, and in the visual and creative arts that are displayed prominently throughout the school. Frequent overseas visits and tours enable pupils to experience for themselves cultural diversity and difference.
- 2.9 The school's arrangements to secure and promote the welfare, health and safety of all its pupils are outstanding. Consequently, they feel safe and confident to approach any member of staff for assurance, if needed. Comprehensive policies are in place to ensure good behaviour. The quality of pastoral care is excellent, and pupils confirm readily that bullying is rare and dealt with promptly and effectively should it occur. Safeguarding policies and arrangements are complete and all staff receive appropriate training. All registers are carefully completed and securely stored. Risk assessments are comprehensive, and visits beyond the school are carefully researched and planned. Fire safety arrangements are thorough. Pupils respond well to lessons on healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating, and they show considerate behaviour and kind concern for each other.

## **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.10 The quality of governance is excellent and it is highly effective in ensuring that the school achieves its aims. The governors have clear ambitions for the school and they provide the staff and the facilities to meet these well. Consequently, the school is secure in its direction and is highly successful.
- 2.11 The governors have responded vigorously to the legal requirements and expectations made of them. They review policies and practice regularly across the full range of responsibility, including safeguarding. Thereby, they ensure the welfare, health and safety of all pupils and staff. They oversee the regular appraisal of the head, teachers and managers. They authorise and regulate expenditure so that financial management is secure and development is well funded. They have significantly expanded and improved the school's premises and facilities, including the enhanced provision and quality of ICT. They recruit appropriate staff carefully. They know their school well and they are clear in their planning for its future.
- 2.12 The quality of leadership and management throughout the school is excellent. Senior roles have been revised and reformed so that management is comprehensive and leadership wholly effective. This includes the direct promotion of successful learning by all pupils, including the gifted and talented and those with statements of SEN, with LDD or with EAL. Leadership is strong and shared. It is also carefully directed. Skilful and committed academic management and provision ensure that pupils enjoy learning, and that their achievement is both strong and successful. The high quality of pastoral care is also ensured by careful management and direction, and by the engagement of most teachers in its provision. The quality of PSHCE is outstanding. So too are careers advice and the encouragement given to pupils to be active in the wider community. As a result, the high standards noted at the time of the last inspection have been sustained across all age groups.
- 2.13 The central register is complete. It contains a full record of all checks on all governors, staff and visitors. It ensures their suitability and secures the safety of all. An extensive transport system for pupils' travel between home and school each day is managed with great skill and care for the comfort and safety of the pupils. The school maintains calm on its busy site, encouraging safe personal and communal growth, and confident, successful learning.
- 2.14 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. This includes meetings, frequent communication both by post and by electronic mail, and regular reports on pupils' progress. Specific meetings to advise on subject choice or career progress and application to higher education are arranged appropriately and attended well. Parental complaints are few and they have all been handled satisfactorily without recourse to formal procedures. Concerns are dealt with promptly and informally.
- 2.15 Parents, in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, showed themselves strongly in support of all aspects of the school's provision and work. They value the opportunities they have to meet teachers. Formal occasions are well attended. Parents expressed to inspectors their pleasure at the school's provision and care for their children.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### **(ii) Recommendation for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that its overall high quality of teaching is consistent across all age groups.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Dr Anthony Dachs

Mr Michael Abraham

Mr Nigel Carr

Reporting Inspector

Former Head, GSA school

Deputy Head, HMC school