

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report** 

**Bristol Grammar School** 

May 2023

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# School's Details

## 1. Background Information

## About the school

- 1.1 Bristol Grammar School is an independent co-educational day school, set in the heart of the city. It was founded in 1532 for the sons of Bristol merchants and tradesmen and moved to its current site in 1879. The preparatory school opened in 1900 and the whole school became fully co-educational in 1980. The school is divided into four sections: infants, which includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting; juniors; seniors; and sixth form.
- 1.2 The school is a registered charity, whose trustees serve as governors with proprietorial responsibility.

#### What the school seeks to do

1.3 The school's aim is to provide an exceptional and rounded education to those who might benefit from it, regardless of their background and financial means. Its key values of kindness, integrity and rigour have been developed following conversation and consultation with pupils. They were chosen as they are the three values that best encapsulate what the pupils want to be.

#### About the pupils

1.4 The school has a diverse mix of pupils from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds with a tenth receiving bursary support. The pupils' ability profile on entry throughout the school is above average compared to those taking the same test nationally. The school has identified 244 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 80 receive additional specialist help. These needs include dyslexia and other diagnoses. Four pupils have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 68 pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 6 have help with their language. The school identifies around 20% of its pupils as being more able and they are part of a scholars' programme.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

#### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; 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 standards and requirements can be found here: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> <u>Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework</u>.

## **Key findings**

2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

## PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the infant and junior school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the infant and junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

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

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

## PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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

2.13 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.

#### 2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.15 A range of information is 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.

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

## PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 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.

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

## PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 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 wellbeing of the pupils.

#### 2.20 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.

## The headline judgements apply 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

School name	National Curriculum name
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
  - Pupils attain high standards throughout the school, reflecting their excellent levels of knowledge and understanding.
  - Pupils are excellent communicators of their ideas; they listen carefully and learn from each other.
  - Pupils display excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their work, using their understanding intuitively to enrich their learning.
  - Pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards their work, effective both as independent and collaborative learners.
  - Pupils have excellent study skills: they research thoroughly, analyse and evaluate their findings and reach secure conclusions.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
  - Pupils are highly confident and resilient individuals, well grounded and modest in their manner.
  - Pupils display a strong sense of appreciation for the diversity of their community and are inclusive in their relationships.
  - There is an excellent level of teamwork amongst the pupils, seen in a wide range of areas, from music and drama productions and sport to the many house activities.
  - Pupils have an excellent sense of right and wrong and take responsibility for their own behaviour.

## Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
  - Enable pupils to feel they have a clearer voice within the school, by regularising and enhancing the activities of different pupil councils.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils attain high standards, evident in their results in public examinations. At A level in 2022, almost two-thirds of grades awarded were at A\* or A, these results exceeding expectations of pupils' performance. They mirror those achieved in earlier years, including centre-assessed and teacherassessed grades. At GCSE, over three-quarters of grades awarded have been at grades 9–7, again exceeding expectations significantly. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve above expectations and in line with the main cohort. The results in 2022 were stronger than those achieved when the last public examinations took place. Almost all the upper-sixth leavers go onto university with the majority going to institutions with particularly high entry requirements, to study a variety of courses. Data from the infant and junior school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), also indicate that the vast majority of pupils are working at levels considerably above the national average and make continuous progress through the years. This strength of outcomes is reflected throughout the school in lessons and pupils' written work, where pupils achieve a high level of success and make excellent progress. Parents comment positively on the culture of achievement within the school. The success of pupils reflects the commitment of the teaching they receive and the effective use of systems for monitoring progress by senior leaders and staff.
- 3.6 Pupils display excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the subject areas and throughout the year-groups. Pupils in the EYFS demonstrated their writing of letters with full confidence and understanding. Junior pupils show knowledge and skills that are at least appropriate for their age with many working above the levels expected for their age. They are confident to use their skills with maturity and independence. Pupils apply their understanding effectively, both in responding to questions posed in lessons and in their written work. Pupils in the senior school show strong levels of prior knowledge, as seen in Year 10 revision lessons for both history and classical civilisation. Pupils in Year 8 showed good research skills when preparing an experiment to investigate the effect of acid concentration on the rate of a chemical reaction. Pupils throughout the school exhibit excellent creative skills, seen in lessons and activities, in recordings of productions and in the displays of art and design technology, seen around the school, that showcase their work.
- 3.7 Pupils are confident and highly effective communicators in the formality of their lessons and also in more informal situations, for example in their involvement in activities. They listen sensibly to what other pupils have to say and share ideas in discussion. This then leads on to the pupils producing a high standard of written work, seen at all stages of the school. From Reception onwards, pupils are keen to contribute; they listen well to staff and their peers, and they respond in a mature and sensible manner, as seen in a Year 2 registration session where they spoke confidently in reviewing particular words. These embedded skills are used with great effect, from pupils talking about a recent visit to the dentist in a Reception class, to pupils in Year 6 using descriptive language to produce a piece of effective prose. In interviews, pupils of all ages spoke with clarity, confidence and purpose. Pupils in a Year 9 geography lesson demonstrated excellent use of specific technical language in their revision on coasts, in both their written and verbal communication. Sixth-form pupils displayed a high level of written skills and thinking in their extended project qualification (EPQ) work.
- 3.8 Pupils show consistently strong numerical skills throughout the school. They demonstrate excellent mathematical knowledge and understanding, such as when solving problems. Pupils in the infant and junior school demonstrate a confident approach to number work. Pupils in Year 4 understood the terms numerator and denominator and then using a fraction wall and extending it, they were able to produce their own sums and solve them. Pupils in Year 7 showed clear understanding of the Fibonacci sequence and were able to define confidently that in the sequence, each number is the sum of the two preceding ones. Pupils can also apply their mathematical knowledge effectively in other subjects, particularly science. This was seen when pupils in Year 10 used the speed of waves formula accurately in a physics lesson, exploring the Doppler effect and applying it to exam questions. Pupils in the sixth form showed excellent individual skill in how to use components on inclined planes to solve problems.

- 3.9 Pupils are highly effective in the way they use ICT, benefiting significantly from producing their work on tablets. Their ability in this area is a significant strength, enabled by the resources provided by the school's governors and leaders. The use of ICT is an embedded part of the pupils' approach to learning. Rather than being just an addition to their work, it is integral to all they do. They explore the potential of these devices fully, for both research and recording of information. They also use the technology to send work to their teachers, who then return it with annotations and even verbal messages assessing the pupils' achievements. This in turn creates a stronger relationship between pupils and teachers, reflected within the questionnaires, where pupils commented positively on the quality of teaching. Pupils in a junior school personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson used an application to create designs and then produce a board to highlight the importance of positive affirmations. Pupils in a Year 8 design technology lesson showed excellent, intuitive use of computers to select 2D images for their work. They then used computer-aided design packages to modify the image successfully before embedding it in acrylic.
- 3.10 Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate excellent study skills, from researching information to developing their ideas and reaching conclusions. Pupils analyse and evaluate information continually with much success. Pupils in a Year 6 English lesson worked independently, responding well to a range of sources and then analysing their own use of vocabulary successfully in their written response. In a Year 8 English lesson, pupils hypothesised perceptively on what Macbeth may have been thinking in his soliloquies, posing some interesting views on his character. In a Year 10 science lesson, pupils demonstrated an excellent range of higher-order skills when they were able to postulate hypotheses and make accurate predictions in the context of explanations for the Doppler effect. Sixth-form pupils in their EPQ work presented plausible hypotheses in a variety of study topics and then developed their theories fully. These ranged from an essay on whether prison is the best solution to rehabilitating female prisoners to the potential development, with 3D printing, of a prosthetic knee joint and how this might benefit people with serious knee issues.
- 3.11 Pupils are highly focused in lessons and commit themselves fully to their work. They work successfully both as individuals and also in groups, sharing ideas effectively and learning from each other. They clearly want to learn and make progress, so they can achieve their full potential. They ask sensible questions which in turn enhance their understanding. Pupils showed an excellent blend of individual and collaborative work during a Year 7 philosophy, religion and ethics lesson on faith and trust. As individuals they considered their own positions in reflective fashion and then in groups were respectful and collaborative in discussion. This positive attitude to learning starts in Reception, where pupils are full of energy and show a willingness to learn. Pupils throughout the school are always ready to learn and they demonstrate a commitment and focus with their work. They are helped in this by the strong working relationship between staff and pupils, facilitating and enhancing the learning process.
- 3.12 Pupils involve themselves fully in the school's extensive extra-curricular programme and achieve high levels of success both as individuals and in teams and groups. In sport the Under-18 male pupils' squad were national indoor hockey finalists and a number of other school teams have reached regional finals in their competitions. There are pupils in national performance squads in rugby, hockey and cricket, as well as individuals playing for professional sports teams. Individuals have gained national success in a range of athletic, swimming and martial arts events. The Under-11 female pupils' team were winners of their cricket competition in the IAPS tournament. In the same age group, the male pupils squad reached the semi-finals of the hockey tournament. Pupils gain success in national music, drama and dance examinations, including at grade 8 in ABSRM awards and diploma and gold awards in LAMDA exams. They also perform in excellent concerts and performances, as seen in a number of recordings, notably of *Oliver* and a dance production of *A Christmas Carol*. Pupils have gained national success in chess, both as teams and individuals. There are around 75 gold certificates awarded in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme annually. Pupils participate in both regional and national events with the Model United Nations programme, often gaining recognition for their contributions.

Pupils also achieve success in a range of national competitions in different subject areas, such as computing, design technology, mathematics, the sciences, languages and philosophy.

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

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are highly confident individuals and display a positive attitude towards their life in school but without any trace of egotistical behaviour. In discussion, pupils spoke with great clarity about their lives at school, inside and outside the classroom. They showed high levels of aspiration for their futures. Pupils' confidence clearly grows from Reception upwards and pupils show a high level of maturity in their outlook and attitudes. Pupils develop new skills through participating in a broad range of activities and this prepares them well for the future. New pupils said that they settled in quickly and that they have gained in confidence through being in the school. Pupils in Year 6 talked positively about their lives at school, reflecting their sense of self-assuredness and their good self-esteem. Pupils in the senior school are also resilient characters, always keen to learn from their mistakes as this can confirm their progress and understanding. Pupils are enabled to build their self-confidence through the strong pastoral support from the school and the non-judgemental atmosphere created. Parents express their appreciation for the school's inclusive approach in this regard.
- 3.15 Pupils show a strong understanding of what is required to make a success of their time at school and outside. They think carefully about the decisions they need to make regarding subject options and the next stages of their education. In this, they appreciate and develop their understanding of future possibilities through the careers' programme that opens up the different avenues available to them and helps them to feel informed. They benefit from a teaching approach which encourages pupils to think and make choices with their learning. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils confidently chose what features to discuss when looking at different landscapes. Similarly, pupils in a Year 10 wellbeing lesson demonstrated an excellent level of understanding about decision-making in relation to their own wellbeing and lifestyle. They gave clear examples in school and in their learning. In lessons, they make academic decisions with conviction, selecting and recognising opportunities that suit their own learning needs. They show a deep awareness of the implications of their decisions, whatever the significance of the matter in hand.
- 3.16 Pupils have a strong awareness of the world around them and seek to look beyond the practicalities of daily life to the non-material. In this, pupils are supported by the school seeking to broaden their perspectives through its curriculum and activities programme without prompting them to take on any specific set of beliefs. Pupils involve themselves wholeheartedly in environmental issues through a number of different initiatives and have been active members of the Bristol Education Partnership's focus on climate change. Pupils in the infant and junior school reflect and comment on life around them with ease and the teaching encourages these reflections. This was seen when children in the EYFS stopped and watched animatedly the blossom swirling in the wind. Pupils talk positively about the ideas they develop through their philosophy and religious education lessons, which provide time for philosophical debate. These skills are developed and built upon throughout the school, so pupils become accustomed to asking the important questions in life. During their analysis of sections of a Macbeth soliloquy, pupils in Year 8 showed an awareness of how a dagger can represent a non-material concept such as death.
- 3.17 Pupils display excellent behaviour in school, moving calmly and purposefully around the site and showing a strong awareness of each other. In discussion they are clear about the concepts of right and wrong and recognise the importance of regulating their own behaviour. They show genuine compassion for each other. The juniors and infants understand fully the expectations set by the school. Pupils are well behaved, mature for their age, support each other, respect their environment and embrace extra responsibility. Pupils appreciate the school's restorative approach to dealing with

misbehaviour because it is more effective in their eyes. They value and respond well to the way staff give them the strategies to improve and do the right thing. This moral outlook is reinforced in lessons as well. In a Year 9 history class, pupils grappled well with analysing the actions of General Haig and held a mature and reflective debate about the morality of his leadership.

- 3.18 Pupils are highly aware of the importance of developing social skills and work together in many different ways in the school to achieve common goals. They are excellent team players, whether it be in sports teams, in the music and drama productions, in the expedition element of the DofE scheme or in the many house competitions, which are often led by the pupils themselves. This was seen in a music rehearsal in the senior school where pupils were observed listening carefully to each other and ensuring that their playing blended with the others, so that each instrument had its place and could contribute to the overall effect of the musical performance. In the recordings of a previous production seen on inspection, pupils clearly demonstrate an excellent ability to work together in performance. In a physical education lesson in the junior school, pupils worked together successfully, both in the session itself but then also in putting away the equipment, at the end of the lesson, which required plenty of good teamwork.
- 3.19 Pupils are aware of their advantages and of the importance of supporting the needs of other people, both within the school community and in the wider world beyond the school gates. Senior pupils involve themselves in a strong community outreach programme, going into local schools and nursing homes, as well as supporting the homeless through food banks and shelters. Many also recognise their responsibilities within school, acting as peer mentors or going down into the infant and junior school and offering advice and guidance. A group of pupils from the senior school asked to help those in the younger years with the subject of menstruation and even delivered a presentation to staff on how the topic could be expressed more effectively to pupils. Junior pupils are friendship prefects and help with the youngest pupils in the school. Through a range of clubs, groups and councils, pupils make good use of a range of opportunities available to them to contribute positively to their school environment. Some groups, such as the eco council, have had a very encouraging influence, helping to bring about changes in school. The peer mentor system has had a positive effect on pupils who seek mental health support and has given the mentors themselves valuable skills in working with people. In interview, pupils said that the full impact of their contribution to the school is unclear. They stated that changes often do not happen as quickly as they would wish and that they would like greater clarity and cohesion in the way in which pupils' opinions are sought and responded to. In this respect, the team agreed this was an area for further development.
- 3.20 Pupils have a strong awareness of the diversity of their community both in school and beyond the school gates. They show clear respect for each other and want to learn more about different cultures and communities. The sixth-form leaders organised a cultural week to embrace this diversity. There is an active 'Equalities' group within school, seeking to raise awareness and the importance of showing tolerance and respect to each other. In the juniors and infants, individuality is encouraged, diversity is accepted and celebrated. A wealth of excellent displays show a range of different cultures with themes of acceptance and respect. During a Year 9 drama lesson on slapstick, pupils showed an awareness of the outdated nature of a video extract shown and its lack of respect for cultural diversity. They commented on the derogatory behaviour of one character's behaviour towards the other as being inappropriate and intolerant.
- 3.21 Pupils in discussion showed a good understanding of the importance of leading healthy lives. Pupils speak confidently about how they keep themselves safe online and how they feel secure within the school. They appreciate the need for following a sensible diet, understanding how to do so. Pupils participate fully in the sports programme available to them, both in the curriculum and in their activities, thus developing their physical health. They are also conscious of the importance of preserving strong emotional health and value the support offered by the school's wellbeing gave thoughtful responses to the idea of considering whether someone can be 'happy' all the time. Using

## 4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

## Inspectors

Mr Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mrs Helen Lowe	Accompanying inspector
Mr Desmond Dunne	Additional inspector
Dr Susan Ley	Compliance team inspector (Former deputy head, SofH school)
Mr Tim Dewes	Team inspector (Former deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Kate Hurley	Team inspector (Former deputy head, IAPS school)
Mr Andrew Rudkin	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr James Thomas	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)