

# School inspection report

6 to 8 February 2024

## **Bolton School Boys' Division**

Chorley New Road

Bolton

Lancashire

BL1 4PA

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders carry out their role diligently. They seek to fulfil the school's aims, which are understood by staff and pupils. Through the academic and extra-curricular curriculum, they instil a culture of high expectations, mutual support, inclusivity and tolerance within the school community. The governors share the leaders' vision and bring effective support and challenge to their oversight role.
2. To develop pupils' character and resilience, leaders provide an extensive programme of extra-curricular and outdoor learning activities. Pupils of all ages participate enthusiastically in this wide range of activities and gain new interests and skills. Activities are carefully planned to develop positive character traits and provide leadership and teamwork opportunities. Pupils show an increasing sense of determination and self-discipline. Pupils often work in partnership, both within the school and the local community, which develops their collaborative and co-operative working skills. The qualities developed by this programme can be seen in pupils' attitudes and behaviour across the school. This programme is a significant strength of the school.
3. Pupils of all ages make good academic progress. They develop creative and critical thinking skills and demonstrate determination and self-discipline. Teachers typically provide well planned and engaging lessons that challenge pupils to consider the topics and issues. On a few occasions, teachers in both schools do not provide opportunities for pupils to undertake challenging tasks to deepen their understanding of the topics.
4. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are respectful, focused and constructive. Pupils engage readily in learning activities. There is a tangible culture of mutual support and willingness to undertake new tasks. Pupils are keen to take responsibility for their learning. Leaders model and praise pupils for showing respect, tolerance and a sensitive awareness of the needs of their peers. As a result of their post-pandemic planning, leaders have increased support for pupils' mental health.
5. Governors and leaders work together to ensure the premises provide a safe environment. Fire safety and aspects of health and safety policies are applied conscientiously. Regular staff training supports effective risk assessment processes, and measures to mitigate risk are well managed. All premises and accommodation are suitably maintained, well-resourced and secure.
6. Leaders and governors have created effective arrangements for safeguarding which promote the safety and welfare of pupils. Safeguarding concerns about pupils are recognised and managed in accordance with local procedures.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

### Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- continue to embed teaching initiatives that challenge pupils throughout the school to make the best possible progress.

### Material change request

7. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to increase capacity to 1180 pupils from September 2024.
8. The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. The safeguarding policy is effectively implemented at all levels and is likely to continue to meet the standard in the proposed increase in pupil capacity. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has a positive relationship with local agencies and makes appropriate referrals. The DSL and deputy DSLs have the capacity to maintain effective safeguarding measures following the proposed increase in pupil numbers. The governors review the safeguarding arrangements annually, liaise closely with the DSL and maintain effective oversight.
9. The school is likely to continue to meet health and safety requirements with regard to the proposed increase in the number of pupils. The governors and senior leaders effectively oversee and monitor health and safety. Procedures are robust, and any issues are identified and addressed. Suitable training regarding health and safety is in place for staff.
10. The school has appropriate arrangements for fire safety. Recommended actions from the most recent fire assessment have been appropriately prioritised and carried out in a timely manner. Staff receive appropriate fire safety training and understand the procedures in the case of a fire emergency. Regular fire drills are held and pupils are confident regarding evacuation procedures. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standard if the material change is approved.
11. Effective procedures are in place to ensure pupils are supervised effectively throughout the school day. Supervision arrangements for pupils following the proposed material change are likely to continue to meet requirements.

12. There is an appropriate risk assessment policy. Risk assessment is systematic and pays attention to key areas of risk and pupils' welfare, such as supervision, safety in laboratories, design technology classrooms, and on school trips. Staff receive relevant training and leaders check completed risk assessments for their effectiveness.
13. The school makes appropriate checks in a timely manner to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
14. Toilet, washing and changing facilities are suitable and sufficient for the proposed increase in pupil numbers. The school has suitable accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils, and this is sufficient for the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Acoustics, internal and external lighting, drinking water and water supply, outdoor space for physical education and play are all of a suitable standard and are sufficient for the proposed increased pupil numbers.
15. The required information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education.
16. The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are met consistently, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. The leadership and management have prepared thoroughly regarding the proposed material change.
17. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

18. Governors and leaders throughout the school prioritise the wellbeing of their pupils. Leaders ensure that all staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to challenge pupils academically and provide compassionate support for their welfare needs. The increased use of academic tracking and research into effective learning styles helps leaders to anticipate pupils' needs and evidence the impact of their initiatives and interventions. This can be seen in the more effective use of academic tracking in the junior school, the reviews of the benefits of outdoor learning and an analysis of the performance of pupils who receive bursaries. These inform leaders' decisions, and thus help pupils to achieve their potential.
19. Leaders from both the boys' and girls' schools work closely together to the benefit of pupils in all of the schools. Shared planning means that all three parts of the school work harmoniously together. There is some joint teaching and mixed groups in the sixth form which support the equality of provision for both male and female pupils and encourage social mixing to develop their communication and interpersonal skills.
20. Academic leaders promote the sharing of effective practice which improves the quality of teaching. The monitoring of interventions to support pupils in English and modern foreign languages for example, and the use of AI software with younger pupils in mathematics, reflect the steps leaders take to improve pupils' progress. Evaluation of the quality of teaching and the use of academic data in the senior school ensures there is suitable challenge across most lessons and subjects.
21. Leaders in the junior school ensure that pupils are well prepared for a smooth transition to the senior school. They track pupils' academic progress and learning skills carefully through a range of testing and monitoring processes. Data and the information it provides informs the planning of teaching and learning across the curriculum.
22. Effective implementation and on-going self-evaluation of the school's character education programme by leaders ensures that it has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing. Leaders act on pupil and staff feedback to further shape the programme, enabling pupils develop to their resilience, creativity and other key character traits.
23. Risk assessment is embedded in the culture of the school through regular staff training. Information on the assessment, management and addressing of measures to mitigate risk is readily available and understood by staff. Thorough processes are in place to manage risks for school trips and off-site activities.
24. Leaders ensure all school premises and accommodation are well maintained, resourced and fit for purpose.
25. Governors and leaders promote a robust culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Teaching and support staff describe with confident understanding the safeguarding measures in place. Pupils recognise that the accessibility and suitability of pastoral support from staff makes them feel safe and secure in school.
26. Leaders are keen to involve pupils in school development as seen in the post-COVID 'behaviours reset'. Here, pupils were actively involved in the restructuring of the behaviour, rewards and

sanctions policy and procedures. This brought about both clarity and a sense of ownership for both pupils and staff, and a consequent improvement in behaviour.

27. There is a clear commitment from leaders to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by making reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility. This has the support and financial backing, when required, of the governors. The leaders for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) play a key role in meeting pupils' needs and give clear guidance to teaching staff. There is careful consideration of how the site can be adapted to improve physical access.
28. Leaders ensure that key information is available through the website which includes details of the aims of the school, the curriculum and arrangements for management of behaviour, anti-bullying, health and safety, first aid and safeguarding. Any complaints are dealt with promptly and addressed in accordance with policy. Recording procedures are detailed and thorough, and leaders are reflective over any issues which are raised. An annual return for pupils funded or partly funded by the local authority is produced and sent to the appropriate local authority.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

29. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

30. Pupils access a wide and varied curriculum, which is supported by appropriate curriculum plans. Effective teaching delivered by enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff enables good progress for pupils. At GCSE and A level pupils achieve results which are above the national average.
31. Lessons are typically well planned, with clear progression in pupils' skills and knowledge in evidence. Teachers manage time well and plan for pupils' individual needs. They are ambitious for pupils to achieve their potential. Teachers use prior assessments and an understanding of pupils' aptitudes to inform the planning and delivery of lessons. Challenging activities are seen in many lessons which are matched to the needs of pupils of all abilities. For example, well-planned activities and high expectations support pupils to develop advanced oral and aural linguistic skills.
32. In the senior school, particularly with groups of pupils studying for GCSE examinations, a few teaching activities lack challenge, particularly for those pupils capable of achieving the highest examination grades. In such cases, their progress is less strong.
33. Pupils engage well in lessons and work both independently and collaboratively to support each other in their learning. Leaders have successfully developed a culture of academic resilience and high expectations. In the sixth form, pupils are keen to debate and explore challenging concepts in their studies. Pupils value and respond to an atmosphere where intellect and high academic performance are promoted.
34. Pupils in the junior school are highly motivated learners and keen to gain a place in the senior school at their transitional point. They work with focus and demonstrate a mature use of vocabulary and language. They are confident, fluent speakers able to explain their ideas and give opposing points of view using relevant vocabulary. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrate significant creative skills, critical thinking and collaboration when they articulately discuss their projects on the planning and building of an outdoor sculpture.
35. Teachers assess pupils' work with care, providing helpful suggestions for improvement. They use aspirational targets as part of this process. Pupils speak with pride about meeting these targets, and they readily seek feedback and support from their teachers. This reflects leaders' promotion of a positive attitude to learning amongst pupils, and a desire to succeed in their academic studies. For example, in English literature, a challenging essay about a Hopkins poem required extensive individual research, an understanding of Christian theology, and perseverance with redrafting to produce significantly improved results.
36. Provision for pupils who have SEND is well planned. They are provided with individual support for their specific needs and resources tailored for them. Teachers are aware of their needs and plan accordingly. This enables them to make good progress. Pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) receive specific support using online teaching programmes to develop their fluency. Their understanding of English improves rapidly, so they can access the full curriculum and make good progress across subjects.
37. Leaders prioritise the development of positive character traits, such as resilience and teamworking skills. Pupils access wide and varied opportunities in sport, performing arts and outdoor learning. Activities are well planned and stimulating and often have direct links to the academic curriculum.



They help build pupils' intellectual, creative and physical skills. Other activities support and develop links with the local community.

38. There is a particular focus on character education linked with outdoor education activities, where pupils develop teambuilding and leadership skills. Pupils throughout the school are assessed on their development of positive character traits throughout their time at the school to help to evaluate their personal development.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

- 39. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

40. Leaders are committed to supporting pupils' physical, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils understand the importance of these areas to their wellbeing. The school provides a positive and supportive environment which allows pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem.
41. In the junior school, an atmosphere of mutual respect is evident in classrooms, with a calm and purposeful working environment. Pupils are supportive of their peers, keen to praise examples of their work. They co-operate both with each other and with staff willingly. Pupils, for example, give advice and support to their peers in order to enable success in tasks set. Pupils make thoughtful choices regarding lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities, opting for clinics and clubs which support their learning or help younger pupils in paired reading clubs.
42. The school has appropriate anti-bullying and behaviour policies, and leaders ensure that they are implemented effectively. Behaviour around the school site is respectful and calm and pupils are polite and mature. Pupils were actively involved in the newly introduced behaviour policy adopted in September 2023. They worked with pastoral staff in the re-writing of the rewards and sanctions element of this policy, and this has a positive impact of their behaviour. Bullying rarely occurs, but when it does, staff deal with it swiftly and efficiently. Anti-bullying week assemblies and work in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons along with anti-bullying ambassador training develop pupils' understanding of the nature of bullying.
43. Pupils develop their spiritual and moral understanding in activities such as philosophy club, where they discuss maturely Kant's universal rule of 'tell a lie and it will hurt you'. In a GCSE religious studies lesson they talked with compassion about how they have a moral duty to speak out against discrimination and not be a bystander, as referenced in their studies of the Holocaust. Pupils of all faiths use the prayer room to take time out to be calm and still and reflect on the spiritual and non-material side of life.
44. The well-planned and age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) and PSHE programmes are delivered effectively by trained, committed teaching staff. The programmes support the emotional needs of the pupils by ensuring that they understand how to stay safe and healthy. The programme includes drugs education, mental health support, advice on relationships and how to stay safe online.
45. Pupils enjoy physical education and sporting activities that promote positive physical and mental health. Leaders have increasingly moved away from a focus on team games to allow a much wider variety of indoor and outdoor activities for those who would prefer, for example, kayaking, water polo, dance, chess and scouting. This has improved participation as pupils develop new skills in line with their individual interests and aptitudes.
46. Leaders are aware of their responsibilities to the elite athletes in the school and have considered the unintended consequences of over commitment to high level sport with the multiple demands and pressures on their time. Timely interventions are made and possible conflicts resolved, considering the pupils' longer-term growth and wellbeing.

47. Leadership roles of house captain, school captain, school monitors and anti-bullying ambassadors enable pupils to develop self-confidence, as they act as role models and take increasing responsibility within the school.
48. Leaders ensure high levels of supervision are in place around the school. Pupils turn to the supervising staff, known as proctors, for support and feel they listen without being judgmental. Pupils are well supervised around the junior school site, with sufficient numbers of staff supervising and a designated quiet space inside and outside the main playing areas. Pupils welcome the effective first aid and medical provision within the school and are secure in their knowledge of what to do if the fire alarms are activated.
49. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Absences are promptly followed up, promoting the safety of pupils. Destinations of pupils who have left the school are recorded, and reports of those who join and leave the school are made to the local authority where required.
50. Leaders and governors have well-planned processes so that the school premises and accommodation are suitable for purpose and well maintained. Comprehensive and detailed health and safety policies and procedures are implemented effectively.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

- 51. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

52. Pupils throughout the school are well prepared for their next stage of learning and are provided with the skills to succeed in later life. Leaders praise pupils for showing respect, tolerance and a sensitive awareness of the needs of their peers.
53. Cultural diversity is broad within the school and pupils enjoy celebrating the traditions of their own and other cultures. Through a well-planned PSHE curriculum, assemblies and other activities, pupils learn respect and understanding for other cultures and faiths. Pupils of all ages show respect for the differences between people, paying due regard to The Equality Act 2010. Pupils comment frequently on how the school is an inclusive community and one in which differences are accepted and diversity is celebrated.
54. Pupils speak with pride about the wide-ranging positions of responsibility in the school that enable them to develop and enhance their leadership skills in preparation for life beyond school. For example, pupil house leaders plan activities, sports, mathematics, quiz and musical competitions and charitable fund-raising events. Pupils elected to the school council and eco club proudly talk about the initiatives and changes they make to the school environment and beyond. They organised a school-wide campaign to save electricity by switching lights off when not in use. Pupils collaborate closely and harmoniously in the production of numerous foundation musical and creative art partnerships.
55. The PSHE curriculum develops pupils' understanding of democracy, rule of law and British values and institutions. Pupils elect members of the Bolton youth parliament. Senior school pupils collaborate with local schools in an extensive range of partnership initiatives in art, music and drama which enhances their understanding of collaboration, community engagement and inclusivity.
56. Pupils readily engage with charity work at a local and international level and the nomination of house charities encourages this philanthropy. For example, a pop-up shop provided donated Christmas gifts wrapped by pupils.
57. The careers guidance programme is comprehensive and carefully planned. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to explore what type of career might suit them. Staff work with pupils and their parents to provide impartial advice about suitable careers that align with pupils' interests and aptitudes. External speakers are a regular feature in the careers programme, for example, a 'get into medicine' talk with extensive opportunities for dialogue with the speaker. Guidance and advice are provided for a wide range of career and higher education options. Older pupils are well informed about the future pathways and given support with applying for their chosen options.
58. Pupils learn about financial and economic aspects through specific activities and curricular topics in mathematics and PSHE. Sixth form pupils are well prepared for life beyond school through the curriculum enrichment programme which includes activities that make them aware of the need to be financially prudent in terms of budgeting and to focus on their dietary needs when catering for themselves.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

**59. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

60. There is a robust approach to safeguarding within the school. An integral part of this is the work of the designated safeguarding leads (DSL), proctors, sexual misconduct liaison officers and staff family liaison offers. Pupils value the easy accessibility of help and support available for them.
61. Governors undertake a detailed and thorough annual review in conjunction with the safeguarding teams in the school. This review ensures that safeguarding training for staff and governors takes place and that appropriate and effective policies are reviewed and implemented. Governors also maintain a close oversight of safer recruitment procedures.
62. Comprehensive and thorough identification and logging of all safeguarding concerns, including child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and violence and low-level concerns about adults ensure that pupils' welfare and safety is of the highest priority. Through efficient use of the monitoring systems, leaders track any safeguarding trends and patterns. Leaders consult with appropriate external agencies when required and make the required referrals.
63. The safeguarding teams liaise closely with colleagues across the school. They use the tracking system to monitor any safeguarding issues and to identify pupils who may benefit from early support.
64. Pupils understand what they can do to stay safe online and how actions such as sending inappropriate images are not only damaging to their wellbeing but are also in breach of the law. There are suitable filters on information technology equipment to protect pupils from harm and keep them safe online.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 65. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	Bolton School Boys' Division
<b>Department for Education number</b>	350/6014
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1110703
<b>Address</b>	Bolton School Boys' Division Chorley New Road Bolton Lancashire BL1 4PA
<b>Phone number</b>	01204 840201
<b>Email address</b>	info@boltonschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.boltonschool.org
<b>Proprietor</b>	Governors of the Bolton School Foundation
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian Riley
<b>Head of Foundation</b>	Mr Philip Britton
<b>Head of Boys' Division</b>	Mr Nic Ford
<b>Head of Primary Division</b>	Mrs Susan Faulkner
<b>Age range</b>	7 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1152
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 to 10 October 2019

## Information about the school

66. Bolton School Boys' Division is an independent day school for male pupils. The school is part of the Bolton School Foundation and shares a campus with the girls' division and primary division. The school consists of a junior school and a senior school, which includes a sixth form. In the sixth form, pupils from both the boys' and girls' divisions are taught together for a small number of subjects.
67. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a single board of governors. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors, head of foundation and head of the boys' division have been appointed.
68. The school has identified 150 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
69. English is an additional language (EAL) for 20 pupils.
70. The school states its aims are to realise the potential of each pupil, by providing challenge, encouraging initiative, promoting teamwork and developing leadership capabilities. The aim is that pupils leave the school as self-confident young people equipped with the knowledge, skills and attributes that will allow them to lead a happy and fulfilled life and to make a difference for good in the wider community.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

6 to 8 February 2024

71. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

72. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

73. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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