



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

NOTTINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL STANDARD INSPECTION

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Nottingham High School

The infant and junior schools were inspected at the same time and separate reports published.

Full Name of School	Nottingham High School
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Registered Charity Number	1104251
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Email Address	info@nottinghamhigh.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Kevin Fear
Chair of Governors	Mr Paul Balen
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	795
Gender of Pupils	Boys
Inspection dates	12 Jan 2011 to 13 Jan 2011 07 Feb 2011 to 09 Feb 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the 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 Standards 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 Nottingham High School was founded in 1513 as an independent school for boys and has maintained this status. It occupies a large elevated site on the outskirts of Nottingham. The school is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is administered by the board of governors.
- 1.2 The school's mission is to offer intelligent boys from a wide variety of economic backgrounds the maximum opportunity to excel. It aims to provide an education for life, creating a secure learning environment, based on curiosity, challenge, encouragement and kindness, in which boys grow in self-knowledge and self-confidence, discover their talents and develop skills of leadership, fellowship and service.
- 1.3 Of the 795 boys in the school, 226 are in the sixth form. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds. Nearly three-quarters of all pupils are of white British heritage and the others are from a range of ethnic groups. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs but the school has identified 62 pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 40 receive discrete learning support. Pupils for whom English is an additional language number 27. All speak English sufficiently well to follow the mainstream curriculum.
- 1.4 Entry into Year 7 is by examination, comprising tests in reasoning, English and mathematics, and, for external candidates, interview. At sixth-form level, pupils are admitted after interview and results at GCSE are taken into account. Those whose first language is not English are asked to achieve International English Teaching System level 6.5 before entry. The average ability of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is far above, and in Years 12 and 13 above, the national average.
- 1.5 Since the last inspection, an infant school, a new sixth-form centre, a new dining hall and digital language laboratories have been opened. The headmaster has been in post since April 2007.

- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the sixth form and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
6.1	Year 12
6.2	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils are extremely well educated. The school's aim to provide an education for life is very largely met. Pupils attain high standards in external examinations and make strong progress in their learning because of their excellent attitudes to study, an academically challenging curriculum, and dedicated and sometimes inspiring teaching. The curriculum is enriched by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, which greatly extends pupils' all-round educational experience. Staff commitment, both to activities and to readily helping pupils, is exceptional. Able pupils excel in mathematical and science Olympiads and national engineering competitions, but encouragement to take up individual research in areas of their subjects outside the confines of examination specifications is limited.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. It is supported by excellent pastoral care, robust and compliant welfare, health and safety procedures, and stimulating opportunities for personal growth offered by the extensive programme of activities, clubs and trips worldwide. The system of tutorial care, in which pupils are cared for by the same tutor throughout their time in the school, is extremely effective. The quality of relationships is exceptional. Pupils show genuine concern for each other and grow strongly in self-awareness and self-esteem. Courtesy and consideration are the norm. In a safe and inclusive environment, pupils feel free to show enthusiasm and ability without fear of ridicule.
- 2.3 The school's aims are being largely met, a strong testimony to the excellent quality of governance, as well as to exceptional leadership. Development planning is of the very highest order. Clear direction and supportive monitoring from the senior management team, which has succeeded in extending its educational vision to most middle managers and staff, have enabled a rise in the quality of standards in teaching and learning. Internal departmental monitoring of staff performance and regular sharing of best practice are increasing, but are not yet common practice across all departments. Effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) now permeates pupils' learning in several areas. The school promotes excellent links with parents, whose replies to their pre-inspection questionnaire showed overwhelming support for almost all aspects of school life, especially the promotion of outstanding values. Passionate teaching, committed staff, and the outstanding pastoral support, curricular and extra-curricular experience, and facilities were all highly commended; many parents said that their children are making progress far exceeding their expectations. A small minority of parents expressed concern regarding the provision of learning support but many went out of their way to praise it, and inspectors found that most pupils needing learning support make very good progress. The responses of the small number of pupils who replied to their own pre-inspection questionnaire were equally supportive, but a few expressed concern that the school does not listen to their views and that teachers do not always treat them equally or monitor their workload. No evidence was found, in pupils' responses in interviews or in inspectors' observations, to support such views. All recommendations from the last report have been implemented.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Extend across all departments regular and consistent monitoring of staff performance and standards of teaching and learning by middle management.
 2. Establish as common practice regular encouragement for pupils to undertake independent research beyond examination specifications at all levels.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Pupils are extremely well educated. The school's aim to provide an education for life is very largely met. The good and often excellent quality of their achievements stems from their intellectual curiosity, stimulated by much inspired teaching. Pupils develop high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. They are highly literate and articulate. They are keen to engage in discussion and debate, argue logically and develop considerable independence of thought. Pupils take the initiative in organising enrichment activities and show highly effective leadership skills. Many show outstanding creative skills, as in their project work on engineering. Pupils show high levels of skill and enthusiasm in sporting activities. They utilise their strong ICT skills, for instance in art, modern foreign languages and design and technology (DT), and apply their knowledge of mathematics well in other areas, for example in the sciences.
- 3.2 Pupils achieve excellence in a wide variety of activities, including national distinctions. Pupils have won engineering awards in a competition for young people, and represented their country in an environmental competition in Stockholm. Many experience success at the highest levels of the mathematics and science Olympiads. In addition to regular successes in graded music examinations, the Royal Academy of Music's woodwind prize has been won. Chess teams have marked success in national championships for schools, and individual participation in international competition takes place at under-16 level. National representative honours are won in rugby, football, cricket and squash, and significant numbers gain the gold and silver levels of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Swimming teams feature regularly in the finals of national events. On leaving the sixth form, the majority of pupils gain entry to their first choice of university. In recent years, a small percentage have taken a Gap Year.
- 3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE and A level have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools and good in relation to the national average for maintained selective schools. At GCSE, 75 per cent of the grades awarded were A* or A. At A level, 84 per cent of grades were A or B. These results indicate that pupils make good and sometimes exceptional progress when compared with those of similar ability, as confirmed by standardised measures of progress and from the information gained from lesson observations, work seen and discussions with pupils.
- 3.4 The pupils' positive achievement is fostered by their excellent attitudes to learning. They are hardworking and engaged, settle readily to their work, and are very attentive and responsive in class. They enjoy their studies, especially when working in small groups, and readily undertake individual research when encouraged to do so. Participation in activities is both extensive and enthusiastic.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.5 A broad, well-balanced and challenging curriculum, covering all the required areas of learning, makes an excellent contribution to pupils' achievements and learning, and is instrumental in the school's fulfilment of its aims to enable pupils to achieve to their full potential. Parents were almost unanimous in their satisfaction with curricular and extra-curricular provision. Sciences are taught separately throughout, pupils access three modern foreign languages and Latin in Years 7 and 8, and ICT skills are developed across the curriculum after initial discrete provision in Year 7. Pupils take ten GCSEs. Ancient Greek GCSE is offered in addition outside the timetable. Setting in some subjects and generally small class sizes foster effective learning. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 have a free choice from twenty-three A-level subjects. This flexibility is a strength. The introduction of the Extended Project Qualification as part of an examination board baccalaureate offers the opportunity for talented pupils to extend a personal academic interest through in-depth research. The possibility of adding an AS level in general studies or a fourth contrasting subject at AS level promotes breadth of experience, helping to prepare pupils for adult life, in line with the school's aims.
- 3.6 All year groups follow a general education programme (GEP), the focus of which shifts from social skills to lifestyle choices and citizenship to economic wellbeing and excellent careers advice. Since the last inspection the learning support department has grown in excellence. The learning support co-ordinator publishes a register of pupils with LDD and creates detailed individual action plans. She sees pupils individually, and in small groups, where the emphasis is on strategies for learning.
- 3.7 The curriculum is enriched by an extensive, varied range of outstanding activities, which constitutes one of the strengths of the school. Many departments supplement their teaching programmes with enrichment activities such as preparation for mathematics and science Olympiads, Year 12 preparation for the University of Cambridge sixth term examination papers (STEP) 1 in mathematics, or subject clubs, societies and discussion groups. Several departments have strong links with local universities. Pupils of all sporting abilities and interests are catered for, through the range of teams and through the increasingly wide variety of sports provided as they progress through the school. Extensive provision for creative subjects enables outstanding achievement. Choirs and musical ensembles make full use of excellent facilities. Numerous visits abroad, including flourishing modern foreign language exchanges, extend pupils' cultural horizons. The school's outreach work caters for service in the local community, including coaching opportunities in cricket.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 The good and often excellent quality of teaching makes a vital contribution to pupils' academic achievements and is a major factor in the creation, in line with the school's aims, of an academic community where intelligent boys are given maximum opportunity to strive for excellence. Since the last inspection, initiatives to raise standards in teaching and learning have resulted in greater sharing of good practice, but the outstanding standards achieved in some areas are not yet replicated across the curriculum. Parents and pupils responding to the questionnaires were fulsome in their praise for teachers' contributions to pupils' learning and achievements.
- 3.9 Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subject and many are passionate about communicating it. Nearly all teaching uses a variety of strategies to involve the pupils, including active learning suited to most boys' learning styles. Teachers have an excellent understanding of their pupils' needs and willingly give support, both in lessons and in extra sessions, to those who need it. Teachers and pupils generally enjoy outstanding relationships based on mutual respect. Although responses to the pupil questionnaire made occasional reference to unequal treatment and a lack of consistency in the use of rewards and sanctions, no evidence of this was observed during the inspection. In many lessons, teachers have high expectations and use innovative and creative approaches, which generate intellectual curiosity and an excitement in learning. The less challenging lessons are well planned, but they are occasionally too slow and uniform for the eagerness and ability of the pupils. Little evidence was seen of teachers taking risks and inspiring pupils to stray beyond the syllabus in their reading and research. However, challenging extension work was observed in work scrutiny, where a Year 7 pupil had investigated triangular numbers using the Mystic Rose.
- 3.10 Good use of ICT was observed, in art, DT, geography, modern foreign languages and music, including pupils who were designing and building circuits to control lights remotely via the internet. Teaching and learning are very well resourced.
- 3.11 Since the last inspection, the majority of teachers have embraced processes that enable them to plan the next steps in learning, but this is unevenly implemented across the curriculum. Very thorough, formative and warmly encouraging marking was observed in history and English. Marking of A-level work was noticeably more helpful. Excellent use of peer assessment was observed in modern foreign languages, where pupils used technology to comment on each other's oral and written work. Nationally standardised measures of progress are used to enable staff to plan the next stage in the curriculum and, along with half-termly grades and an excellent procedure to highlight any cause for concern, to monitor pupils' progress and identify under-achievement.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent and accords well with the aim of the school to provide an education for life. It is promoted by the outstanding quality of relationships and the excellent care shown for pupils by dedicated staff. Pupils flourish in a community where they are valued as individuals. They develop into mature, confident and grounded young people, who have a helpful, committed attitude to their friends, to their school and to the wider community.
- 4.2 Pupils' high levels of self-awareness derive from a secure learning environment, which allows them to develop a strong sense of self-worth. Mutual support is strong. Self-esteem and inclusivity are fostered by spiritual assemblies, and self-belief to facilitate open and trusting relationships with others is engendered by the excellent GEP programme. Pupils readily grasp the opportunity provided by the new dining hall and sixth-form centre to congregate, interact and discuss in aesthetically pleasing and congenial surroundings. There is an air of creative excitement around the school.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral awareness is excellent. They have a keen sense of right and wrong, and talk confidently and sensitively about a wide range of moral issues. Assemblies challenge their thinking on morality and they are confronted by moral dilemmas in many areas of study, as when Year 7 English pupils were observed researching human rights in preparation for a mock trial of Prospero for his treatment of Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest*. Pupils are active participants in raising money for charities. Several translate their moral code into action, helping others, in particular through the 'Community Action' programme.
- 4.4 Pupils' social awareness is one of their great strengths. They show outstanding commitment to the school community and play an active role in school life. They are unfailingly courteous and polite. They readily exercise responsibility, take initiatives to organise activities and demonstrate excellent leadership skills. Social responsibility is seen in the behaviour of older pupils, who act as good role models, and in outstanding mentorship initiatives, such as the mathematics 'buddy' scheme. Pupils are alert to the responsibilities of citizenship, emphasised by the GEP and enhanced by visits to the school by prominent members of society.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is also strong. They have a welcoming attitude to different faiths and cultures, whilst maintaining a keen appreciation of the value of their own cultural identity. The extensive cultural experiences pupils encounter in art, DT and music are a defining part of school life. Pupils' cultural understanding is furthered by the wide range of trips and modern foreign language exchanges that attract extensive participation.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.6 The quality of pastoral care and of the arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety is a significant strength of the school. In line with its aims, the school provides an environment that fosters curiosity, challenge, encouragement and kindness, where everyone listens and responds to each other, allowing pupils to develop into confident young people who have strong emotional intelligence.
- 4.7 The strong pastoral structure promotes effective targeted support for each pupil and contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. Heads of year, house masters, tutors and form teachers integrate their roles well. Form teachers deliver the thought-provoking GEP programme, which is tailored to the age of the pupils. House masters organise events and competitions to extend participation in activities to all and encourage community spirit. The tutors care for the individual pupil. Social awareness and cohesion are enhanced by the highly regarded tutorial system that mixes pupils from all year groups together, in line with the school's aim to give a shared sense of belonging. Remaining with the same tutor and assistant tutor throughout their school career provides an excellent opportunity for personalised pastoral care. Tutors get to know their tutees extremely well and are thus in a good position to monitor their personal and academic development, and to provide decisive support and guidance, particularly at focal moments. Further support is available from the pastoral support worker, the nurse and the learning support team.
- 4.8 Excellent relationships amongst pupils and between staff and pupils generate a supportive environment in which all pupils feel safe to be themselves and learn to show respect for others. Effective procedures promote exemplary behaviour in class and around the school. The GEP deals highly effectively with social relationships, including bullying. Pupils appreciate that, if bullying occurs, it is dealt with promptly and fairly.
- 4.9 Excellent and comprehensive policies and procedures, including effective child protection training for all staff, are effectively implemented, indicating the high priority given to the safeguarding of pupils and their welfare, health and safety. Thorough risk assessments cover all aspects of school life, including trips off site, and all necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Any accidents are suitably recorded and facilities for pupils who become ill during the school day are very good. An appropriate plan is in place to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities. Pupils understand the importance of choosing a healthy diet and grasp opportunities to take regular exercise. School meals are nutritious and give plenty of choice. The admission and attendance registers have been accurately maintained.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. Since the last inspection, first rate initiatives, such as improved induction for governors and the production of an excellent governors' handbook, have raised the standard considerably, enabling the school's aims to be met with much success. Parents' responses to the questionnaire indicate their strong approval of the school's governance and of the values the school promotes.
- 5.2 A well-defined structure of sub-committees provides a framework that enables effective oversight of the school. Governors discharge extremely well their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. They enjoy a positive working relationship with the school's highly collaborative leadership. At the heart of this relationship lies excellent development planning, an area of strength in which governance and leadership work cohesively together, offering a clear sense of the direction in which the school is heading. In recent years, the expertise of the governing body has been increased by the recruitment of new governors with relevant skills in a number of important areas, including education. Governors have undertaken an 'away day', with training input from a professional school governance body, and presentations to the school committee have been made on governors' awareness of, and responsibilities for, health and safety, and child protection.
- 5.3 The governors gain very good insight into the school and its workings through regular visits. Each academic department has a 'governor champion', who maintains regular contact with the head of department, whilst other governors support different areas of the school. Staff appreciate the governors' dedication and interest in the school. The ethos and sense of purpose created reflect the placing of strong personal development and high achievement in fields academic, creative, sporting or musical at the heart of the school's vision and practice.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good overall, with many outstanding features. Parents' questionnaire responses indicate almost unanimous satisfaction with the running of the school. Leadership is excellent. The senior management team works in an effective and highly collaborative manner to enable the school to promote academic achievement and outstanding personal development in a safe and fully supportive environment, in line with its holistic educational aims. Clear and focused development planning covering all aspects of school life is a strength of the school. The three-year whole-school development plan is drawn up following widespread consultation with staff and governors. The safeguarding of pupils is prioritised, and excellent monitoring of the effectiveness and implementation of the comprehensive policies and procedures covers the key areas of child protection and welfare, health and safety, in which the staff are appropriately trained. The school operates safer recruitment procedures, implementing comprehensive and effective arrangements for checking the suitability of all staff, including volunteer and supply staff, and governors.
- 5.5 Since the last inspection, strategies have been successfully developed to strengthen the quality of middle management and to take teaching and learning forward. Heads

of department produce an annual report detailing progress against departmental development plan targets, and in conjunction with the headmaster and the academic deputy head, targets are set for the following year. The excellent practice in monitoring staff performance, implemented by several heads of department, is not yet replicated across all subjects. The professional review scheme, introduced for all teaching staff in 2007, with a two-year cycle, involves setting clear targets, appraisal of whether these are met, and lesson observations by senior and middle managers. The scheme is more developmental in nature than its predecessors. Pastoral responsibilities are, however, not included in the areas reviewed. In-service training frequently addresses pastoral issues, but pastoral managers do not formally evaluate consistency of performance of tutors or form teachers.

- 5.6 Strong emphasis is placed on the appointment of high quality staff and their effective induction. Continuing professional development of all staff is encouraged. Leadership and senior management's concern for staff welfare is exemplified by the focus on this topic within the school development plan. Teaching and facilities are extremely well resourced, and grounds and buildings are very well maintained. Financial and estates management is excellent; support staff make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school community and the school is very well administered.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.7 Links between the school and parents are excellent and strongly support the school's aims. Responses to the parental questionnaire show that parents are positive about almost all aspects of the school, not least its communication with them. Parents commend the passionate teaching by committed staff, and the outstanding pastoral support, curricular and extra-curricular experience, and facilities, leading to their children's progress far exceeding their expectations. A small minority expressed concern about the provision of learning support, but several praised it as outstanding. The inspectors found that most pupils needing learning support make very good progress.
- 5.8 Parents are encouraged to participate in the life of the school by supporting key events. The receipt of parents' guidance booklets when boys join the school and the subsequent academic information booklets at each stage enable parents to engage with the education process as their sons move through the school. Appropriate lines of communication ensure that parents remain well informed with regard to their children's progress. Two detailed and helpful written reports and two or three interim grade sheets, together with annual parents' meetings, enable parents to keep in touch with their sons' progress. The use of the pupil diary keeps them abreast of day-to-day issues. If they have cause for concern over any matter, they contact tutors by email or by telephone and almost invariably receive a rapid, caring response. If they are not satisfied with the school's response, a formal complaints procedure can be invoked. Full details of this are provided on the school's website. Inspectors agree with the great majority of parents that the school handles concerns with care.
- 5.9 Full information, including all school policies, is readily available for parents on the school website. Electronic newsletters, together with the school calendar, inform parents of forthcoming events, whilst the excellent illustrated school magazine, and *Connect*, a glossy newsletter, celebrate pupils' successes and report on the school's life and the plethora of activities in which it is involved. Regular surveys, now conducted electronically, enable the school to respond to parental concerns and

assure them that their views are valued. Parents' views are fed into its comprehensive development planning. A flourishing parents' association, The Friends of Nottingham High School, is socially active in its support for the school.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other 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

Mr John Sugden	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Beverley Birchley	Vice-Principal, SHMIS school
Dr Philippa Davies	Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Christopher Hawkes	Head of Department, SHMIS school
Mr Toby Mullins	Head, SHMIS/HMC school
Dr Andrew Storey	Director of ICT, HMC school