



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Colston's School

October 2019



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School's Details

School	Colston's School			
DfE number	801/6002			
Registered charity number	1079552			
Address	Colston's School Bell Hill Stapleton Bristol BS16 1BJ			
Telephone number	01179 655207			
Email address	enquiries@colstons.org			
Headteacher	Mr Jeremy McCullough			
Chair of governors	Mr Tim Ross			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	769			
	EYFS	52	Juniors	175
	Seniors	425	Sixth Form	117
Inspection dates	15 to 17 October 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Colston's is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 18 years. It is a charitable company limited by guarantee with a board of governors.
- 1.2 Colston's was founded in 1710 as a school for poor Christian boys by the Society of Merchant Venturers at the behest of Edward Colston. The company remains as trustee for the school. The school became independent in 1946 and co-educational in 1984.
- 1.3 Colston's is divided into a lower school for pupils in the Nursery to Year 6 and upper school for pupils in Years 7 to 13 with the head of the latter having overall responsibility. The pastoral structure in the upper school is based on a vertical house system and, in the lower school, form tutors are the focus of pastoral care.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school's aim is to provide opportunities for its pupils to fulfil their full potential in all areas, academic, creative, sporting and social. It aims to encourage a spirit of service in its pupils, so that they may become confident, respectful and responsible citizens, and it aims to prepare them for higher education and employment, encouraging leadership, initiative and independence.

About the pupils

- 1.5 The majority of pupils live locally, in Bristol or South Gloucestershire. A number travel from a wider area, including South Wales and Somerset. Families come from a range of socio-economic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The school has a small number of international students. The school has identified 140 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom 69 receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an educational, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 86 pupils of whom 11 receive additional support for their English. The school has created a 'High Achievers' programme for those pupils it has identified as being more able.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports 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. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was 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 report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. 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 regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; 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 full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

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 junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2016 to 2018, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2016 to 2018 have been above the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 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 variously 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 upheld.

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 well-being 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include 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:

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils make strong progress throughout the school and reach a level of achievement that reflects fully their potential.
 - Pupils display an excellent attitude to their learning.
 - Pupils are excellent communicators, both orally and in their written work.
 - Pupils are strong independent learners and show excellent determination in improving their work.
 - Pupils collaborate very effectively with their learning and help each other in and beyond the classroom.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils are very positive and confident individuals, enjoying an excellent relationship with peers and adults alike.
 - Pupils display excellent levels of self-awareness, taking full responsibility for their own development in preparation for the outside world.
 - Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and show exemplary behaviour around the school.
 - Pupils are very supportive of each other and have an excellent sense of service to the community.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes the school might wish to consider the following:
- develop pupils' competence and confidence in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across all subject areas in the upper school.

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 make very good progress across the full range of subjects in the curriculum and show a strong level of achievement, that reflects successfully the school's aim of developing all pupils' potential. At A level in the years 2016 to 2018, 37 per cent of grades were A* or A and 69 per cent A* to B. At GCSE in those same years, 55 per cent of grades were A* or A and 81 per cent were A* to B or their equivalents. There is no significant difference in attainment between the different groups within the school, and all pupils achieve the same high level of progress. This same level of strong success is true also of those taking Business Technology Education Council (BTec) and Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate (CTec) awards. Pupils are supported in their learning by excellent procedures for assessment and monitoring, which are driven by the school's leaders and governors and used effectively in the teaching.
- 3.6 Pupils show an excellent level of knowledge of their subjects and use this very effectively in their learning, reflecting their skilful understanding of the work they are doing. This was seen across all areas of learning. In a lower-school lesson on design and technology, pupils showed an effective ability to use skills from other subjects to support their construction of squares. Younger pupils in science engaged in an excellent discussion on why their bridges were not working properly and how they could solve the problem. Sixth-form pupils displayed an excellent grasp of concepts in the way they discussed different texts on war, quoting from these to illustrate their points. Pupils make excellent progress in developing their understanding, prompted by the valuable emphasis on how the lessons

are leading to specific outcomes for learning, often linked in the upper school to the requirements of examination technique and assessments. This excellent understanding was seen also in the mature manner in which pupils completed their own self-assessments on pieces of work, reflecting their sense of responsibility for learning. Pupils are very good, creative workers not just in those lessons within the creative faculty but also in the way they use such skills in other subjects. Senior pupils in their graphical communication projects were making effective use of combining aesthetic, linguistic and scientific understanding to produce the end result. In all their work, pupils across the school are supported very effectively in their learning by the commitment and enterprise of the teaching, as it seeks to challenge pupils and develop their understanding to its full individual potential.

- 3.7 Pupils are very strong and confident communicators both in discussion and in the way they write. They are keen to develop their ideas in class, as seen in a lower-school mathematics lesson where pupils were very articulate in explaining to each other why they had chosen a particular method for answering the questions. Pupils from one class gave an excellent assembly to the rest of the lower school. Senior pupils delivered very clear and useful presentations to each other in a lesson on *Macbeth*, showing a very good command of the text and its key ideas. Excellent pieces of written work were in evidence across the whole school. The work scrutiny showed strong, consistent evidence of extended writing of high quality. A group of pupils with SEND spoke of how much more confident they were in discussion and in their written work, as a result of the helpful guidance from their teachers. Overall, the approach of teaching is one of engaging pupils fully in their lessons, so that they develop these communication skills successfully.
- 3.8 Pupils display very strong numeracy skills all through the school and apply this level of understanding in other subjects. This was seen, for example, in the work of pupils who analysed complex data to give the likely outcomes for natural disasters. Senior pupils showed an excellent understanding of detailed economics data and clearly were comfortable with applying such information to a specific context. In a senior physics lesson, pupils showed excellent numeracy skills to produce spreadsheets plotting the path of projectiles. Lower-school pupils tackled problems in a mathematics lesson, showing a range of excellent skills and coping effectively with the extension tasks they were given.
- 3.9 Pupils are, for the most part, confident in their knowledge of ICT and make effective use of this skill in some of their subjects, but this is not always the case in all areas of the school. In the lower school, pupils develop very good skills appropriate to their age across the subjects and say that they really enjoy their lessons and learn from them. In the upper school, pupils show good ICT skills in creative subjects, which make excellent use of ICT, as seen in the effective manipulation of images in art and graphic design lessons. However, pupils lack confidence in the use of ICT and their skills are not fully developed in other subject areas.
- 3.10 Pupils display excellent study skills across the school. They have high aspirations and are eager to develop their learning. They research well and use the knowledge gained to put forward their own ideas, listen to alternatives and then reach conclusions based on all that has been discussed and learnt. Pupils are confident in developing their work and look consistently for further ways to improve their learning. In a lower-school lesson, pupils discussed independently at a high level how the author they were reading was creating suspense and tension. Upper-school pupils showed excellent skill in writing about a piece of art, moving from close analysis, through interpretation of what it was trying to say and finally to a judgement on its quality and success. These excellent study skills are encouraged by a style of teaching which has a strong focus on pupils working for and by themselves.
- 3.11 Pupils participate fully and gain new skills in the school's co-curricular programme. They achieve strongly both as individuals and together with others, in a range of activities, ranging from sport to public speaking. In the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), 13 pupils achieved the gold award last year and 29 achieved silver. There are representatives at regional and national level in a range of sports, as well as team success regionally. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about all they had learned from their participation in last year's musical and were currently enjoying the challenges of *The Lion King*, bringing out their different qualities and helping them to become more confident as individuals.

This programme is supported fully by the commitment of staff and the resources provided by the school's leaders and governors.

- 3.12 Pupils are highly enthusiastic and very positive in their approach to learning. They are excellent independent learners, but they also work very successfully in groups, encouraged by a teaching approach which seeks to give them a high level of responsibility. They understand the importance of taking charge of their own work, seen in the positive manner in which they approached the target-setting session observed. In this lesson, pupils worked together very effectively in pairs to rank in order the Colston's values and then discussed these with the rest of the group. In a sports' lesson, pupils worked hard individually to develop a particular skill, persevering until it was perfect. In a science lesson, upper-school pupils helped each other to resolve a problem with the equipment so that they could all complete the experiment successfully, succeeding in this without needing the teacher's help. Pupils in the lower school spoke about going to extension clubs after school so that they could improve their knowledge and skills, reflecting their determination to progress.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils display very high levels of self-confidence both with their work in lessons and also in their lives beyond the classroom, fully in keeping with the school's aims. This quality is promoted by the school's strong emphasis on the development of pupils as rounded and well-balanced individuals, ready to leave school and enter the outside world as effective citizens. They are very conscious of their own qualities and how they can improve themselves in all aspects of their lives. They are strong, resilient individuals who thrive in the positive atmosphere created by the school's leaders and teachers across all parts of the school. They set themselves challenging targets and then persevere until these are achieved. Younger pupils in the lower school were able to assess their own progress in the lesson, suggest amendments to each other and then work to put these in place, fully engaged in the process of learning on their own. Sixth-form pupils are very successful in producing individual projects, some of which were of outstanding quality and which rely very much on their own independent work and determination to complete. In this, the school's provision is excellent in the way that it forges links with local employers to create these 'professional' projects, leading to the greater employability of the leavers.
- 3.15 Pupils understand the real importance of making decisions and taking responsibility for their lives, and they involve themselves fully in doing so. The senior pupils spoke warmly of how they are supported by the school's excellent 'Future Leaders' programme, preparing them for higher education and employment, which enabled them to make the right choices for the future. Pupils gain excellent experience in taking decisions through the many opportunities for this, not only in specific groups such as the school council but also very much in the school's fundamental approach of seeking pupils' opinions and valuing their contributions. Pupils have been responsible for encouraging changes in the lunch arrangements and in the provision of bag-racks, as well as promoting the idea of Colston's values as a key element in effective learning in the school. In the lower school, younger pupils were observed choosing how to spend their activity time. Sixth-form pupils in their role as reading mentors had continually to make decisions on how best to support the junior pupil they were helping, coming up with the best strategies for improvement.
- 3.16 Pupils show a good appreciation of non-material elements of life, and this strengthens their self-understanding. Senior pupils discussed very thoughtfully the relationship between economics and morality and whether they could co-exist, appreciating that personal perspective will often distort views. This discussion led to an excellent consideration of what constituted happiness and success. In an English lesson, sixth-form pupils discussed profoundly the morality of war and how soldiers might have viewed their potential fate, balancing their own life against the future survival of their families and nation. Pupils learn from the many opportunities for the creative arts, both in the curriculum and

in activities, leading them to understand more fully these wider concepts. Pupils feel very supported by the school's PSHE programme and the strong pastoral network which strengthens their sense of well-being and, in turn, their ability to deal effectively with all the challenges that come along. They feel able to step back and reflect on all that is going on around them.

- 3.17 Pupils have an excellent grasp of right and wrong. In interviews with pupils in the upper school, they talked about the school's systems of rewards and sanctions in a measured manner, appreciating that when they had got things wrong, a sanction was deserved and they would learn from it. Pupils in the lower school explored very effectively the concept of consequence and how their actions might have consequences. The level of behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding, pupils in the senior school confidently speaking to inspectors and going out of their way to help when needed. The youngest pupils in the lower school had a lovely manner with each other, always wanting to help. The prefects in the upper school talked in very positive terms about how the school's ethos promoted a clear understanding of moral choices, making them stronger as individuals and of more use as citizens for the future.
- 3.18 Pupils work very effectively in teams and have a number of opportunities for this. Activities, such as the combined cadet force (CCF) and the DofE award scheme, promote the skill of working together in a variety of ways, as well as tasks that are set in lessons. The house system promotes the opportunity for different age-groups to mix and collaborate, pupils developing valuable skills of cooperation through their link to a house. The gains in social development are seen in the many house competitions, such as the house cross country where the atmosphere was very positive, pupils showing their appreciation of each other's contribution. The current musical production is an example of excellent teamwork with contributions from many departments and individuals across the school. In a lower-school ICT lesson, pupils worked together successfully to complete their tasks, helping each other to understand what was needed, creating a very positive atmosphere of mutual benefit and enjoyment.
- 3.19 Pupils show an excellent awareness of the importance of helping others both within school and in the wider community. This is in keeping with the school's aim of promoting a strong sense of service in its pupils. There is a strong commitment to fund-raising for charity within the school. Pupils choose the charities they want to support and come up with ideas to raise money, teaching them the value of appreciating their own good fortune. Pupils also show considerable commitment to helping the wider community in practical ways, through the various service opportunities offered through the school, again furthering their perspective of the needs of others. Senior pupils displayed excellent maturity in their understanding of the world and how they could influence it as citizens. The school council works effectively for the school community with its three areas of focus; Colston characteristics, catering, and teaching and learning, the members taking their roles very seriously and learning the valuable role of participation and representation, a taste of their democratic futures.
- 3.20 Pupils show a genuine respect for each other and are fully appreciative of the rights of all individuals. The atmosphere in school is very open and relaxed with everyone seeming at ease with each other. Pupils grow in strength as a result of this culture, supported by the excellent rapport between pupils and teachers. Pupils learn to appreciate how different the world can be. In an upper-school lesson, pupils were learning about life in Mumbai and were having to consider questions on how they would cope with the circumstances and whether the differences were fair, thus broadening their perspective of other cultures in a very real way. In the lower school at breaktimes, pupils played together imaginatively, ensuring that nobody was left out, so that all could enjoy relaxing in a happy and positive environment.
- 3.21 Pupils know how to lead healthy lives and talked positively about all they had learned. They appreciated the food on offer in the dining hall and the many sporting opportunities both in lessons and in clubs, enabling them to become healthier individuals. Pupils are very conscious of the importance of keeping safe, in every sense. In interviews across the school, pupils were confident of their understanding of online safety. In the lower school, one younger pupil stopped one of the

inspection team and said they were going to tell a teacher because they did not know him, clearly knowing to watch out for strangers. Pupils also commented positively on the support they received for their emotional health, seen in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson where stress and anxiety were discussed sensibly and thoughtfully. Pupils feel confident that they could talk to the pastoral team if they had any concerns, reflecting the excellent relationship that exists between all parts of the school, a real achievement for the school's teachers, leaders and governors.

4. Inspection Evidence

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

Inspectors

Mr Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mr James Pym	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Miss Eleni Conidakis	Team inspector (Head of lower school, HMC school)
Mr Richard Palmer	Team inspector (Head, SofH school)
Mr Jason Slack	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Christopher Wright	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)