

# School inspection report

11 to 13 February 2025

## **Bootham School**

51 Bootham

York

North Yorkshire

YO30 7BU

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors support and challenge senior leaders effectively. Various sub-committees report to the main board, ensuring clear oversight of the school. Leaders regularly update policies, monitor implementation and align the school's aims with Quaker principles of simplicity, truth, equality, peace and sustainability. Boarding leaders liaise with a designated governor to ensure the wellbeing of boarders.
2. The school provides a well-structured curriculum across all subject areas, promoting fundamental British values, respect and tolerance. Pupils, including children in the early years, achieve well, with GCSE and A-level results above national averages. Leaders and staff use regular assessments of pupils' progress to provide pupils with additional support for their learning when required.
3. Teachers create a collaborative environment, with well-planned lessons, suitable use of extension activities when applicable, and positive relationships with pupils. Early years children develop their language skills well through a vocabulary-rich environment and interactive learning.
4. In some departments, teachers' feedback to pupils helps them understand how to improve their work. However, this is not consistent across all departments.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive tailored support through learning plans, teaching assistants and external agency involvement. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) benefit from effective use of specialised resources and support from trained staff.
6. Leaders foster a culture of mutual respect between staff and pupils, promoting confidence and inclusivity. Leaders manage behaviour effectively and support pupils to overcome any differences. Leaders monitor behaviour carefully to identify any trends and provide appropriate support when required.
7. Boarders develop independence whilst living in a nurturing and caring atmosphere. Boarding accommodation is suitable and comfortable.
8. Leaders embed Quaker values such as equality and sustainability in the curriculum, fostering warm staff-pupil relationships and a developed community spirit, highlighted by weekly Quaker meetings. A culture of respect and tolerance informs pupils' behaviour and open discussions on people's protected characteristics such as race, sex and belief. Pupils debate with sensitivity, listening to differing viewpoints respectfully.
9. The careers programme helps pupils understand the options available to them after they leave school. Pupils and their parents receive guidance on subject choices. Individual conversations are available with knowledgeable staff to further help pupils make decisions.
10. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The safeguarding policies and procedures, including those relating to safe recruitment, reflect current statutory guidance and are applied effectively. A designated governor collaborates with safeguarding leaders and reports regularly to the main board. Staff receive comprehensive training to ensure clarity on their safeguarding responsibilities.

## 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.

### Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that teachers' feedback to pupils consistently enables them to understand how to improve their work further.

### Material change request

11. Inspectors considered the school's request to change the details of its registration to include pupils aged 2 to 19 years.

- Leaders plan the early years curriculum to ensure it is age-appropriate and supports children's development across the seven areas of learning. The early years provision features well-equipped indoor and outdoor spaces, with resources and the environment suitable for children aged 2 to 5 years. There are sufficient staff in the early years to ensure that the required staff-to-child ratios can be maintained once the proposed material change takes place.
- Staff are trained to meet the specific needs of two-year-old children. They use their knowledge of child development to deliver well-sequenced teaching and learning across all areas of learning, including the prime areas. Staff develop children's communication and language and physical skills effectively. They also enable children to develop their personal, social and emotional skills, such as when sharing and when engaged in co-operative play.
- Staff promote children's positive values and self-confidence effectively. They promote the school's positive and inclusive values and encourage children to appreciate and value themselves and others.
- Leaders, including those of the early years provision, have planned effectively to ensure the school is well prepared to accommodate the proposed material change.

12. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors provide efficient support and challenge to senior leaders to ensure that they apply their skills and knowledge to meet their responsibilities effectively. Various sub-committees, consisting of governors and senior leaders, cover operational areas of the school and meet regularly. Sub-committees then report on their activity to the main board. Regular monitoring of leaders' reports, governor visits and leaders' attendance at committee meetings ensure that governors maintain a clear oversight of the school.
14. Senior leaders discuss any changes to statutory requirements and make changes to policies and procedures as necessary. They then check that any changes have been implemented effectively and in line with their intentions so that the Standards are met and so that the school promotes the wellbeing of pupils successfully.
15. Leaders ensure that the school's aims and ethos follow the Quaker values of simplicity, truth, equality, peace and sustainability. They communicate these aims and values clearly and effectively. Leaders encourage all staff to act as role models of the Quaker principles.
16. Boarding leaders receive regular training and are knowledgeable about the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS). They utilise their knowledge and understanding to support the wellbeing of boarders effectively, including through maintaining productive links between boarding and academic staff. A governor with specific responsibility for boarding reports to the main board.
17. Leaders, including those in the early years, use their effective self-evaluation to generate medium- and longer-term plans based around themes of pastoral care, academic, co-curricular and boarding provision. Different school stakeholders meet to create an annual plan. This includes the consideration of any unintended consequences that might result from implementation of their actions.
18. Leaders maintain effective liaison with external agencies and follow their guidance carefully to support pupils, including any affected by safeguarding issues.
19. Leaders manage risk effectively. Risk assessments identify potential risks comprehensively and put appropriate measures in place to mitigate any risks. Leaders provide training in risk assessment so that staff have a clear understanding of its importance and of the school's risk assessment procedures.
20. Leaders encourage pupils to submit ideas for discussion. They are proactive in listening to pupils' views and taking them into account in their decision-making. For example, pupils successfully made a case to change the lunch menu and aspects of uniform.
21. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy effectively so that most concerns are resolved at an informal stage. They maintain suitable records of complaints and any actions taken as a result of these. Leaders and governors check regularly for any trends in parental concerns with a view to mitigating these.
22. Leaders provide parents with all required information, most of which is published on the school's website. Leaders provide regular newsletters that highlight school events. The school provides

parents with regular and detailed reports on their child's progress. The school provides the local authority with the required information relating to funded pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

23. Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act (2010). They make reasonable adjustments to ensure that pupils with SEND can fully access the curriculum. A suitable three-year accessibility plan is in place and updated annually.

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

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

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

25. There is a well-planned and structured curriculum throughout the school, which provides pupils with a wide variety of learning opportunities across the required subject areas. Additional programmes of study included in the curriculum are planned to provide pupils with skills for life beyond the school. Leaders have developed, and regularly evaluate, comprehensive schemes of work in line with national curriculum age-related expectations. All schemes of work consider ways of promoting British values, such as those of tolerance and individual liberty and promote a culture of mutual respect and appreciation of diverse faiths and beliefs.
26. The curriculum allows pupils to achieve at the level appropriate to them. Pupils, including children in early years, achieve well at each stage of their education.
27. An appropriate assessment framework is in place. Regular assessments ensure that pupils receive information to inform their progress. Pupil progress is tracked by departments and, where necessary, interventions are put in place to support pupils. In some departments, teachers' feedback to pupils enables them to better understand how they can improve their work further. However, the feedback provided is not consistently effective in this regard across all departments.
28. Teachers create a productive working environment in lessons enabling pupils to make progress. They display good subject knowledge and use assessment information to ensure that lessons are well planned. Many teachers utilise extension activities when appropriate to enable further challenge and learning. Teachers have positive relationships with the pupils and create a collaborative environment in which pupils can make good progress. Results at GCSE and A level are typically above national averages.
29. Boarding pupils appreciate having teachers available to them in the evenings so that they can receive academic support. Senior boarders make themselves available to their younger peers and assist them with any academic and pastoral concerns.
30. Leaders use effective methods to identify the needs of children and pupils who have SEND. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND provides teachers with detailed information and learning support plans to support their use of effective strategies to meet pupils' needs and promote their learning. When required, junior pupils receive additional support in letters and the sounds they represent, writing and mathematics, and senior pupils receive support in individual subject areas. Pupils who have SEND are supported in lessons by teaching assistants or by teachers outside of lesson time. The school liaises with parents and involves outside agencies where required. Leaders give careful thought to how strategies such as seating arrangements and reinforcement of key vocabulary can be used to support pupils' learning.
31. Leaders and staff provide effective additional support to pupils who speak EAL when needed. All teaching staff receive training in how to support pupils who speak EAL. In early years, children who speak EAL are supported through clear links made between English vocabulary and the languages children speak at home.
32. Staff in the early years make effective use of a language-rich environment and their interactions with children to enable the effective development of language and communication skills. They introduce children to a range of key vocabulary linked to topics across the curriculum. As a result, children in early years become articulate and confident speakers.

33. Staff provide parents with detailed feedback about their child's progress through a comprehensive programme of reports and parent-teacher meetings. Parents are invited into school weekly and attend regular talks and workshops, such as about GCSE choices or the development of study skills.
34. The school provides pupils with a broad range of co-curricular activities which develop pupils' skills in areas such as debating, astronomy and coding. Senior pupils are encouraged to organise their own clubs to practise their skills, such as improvising musicals. In the junior school, activities such as capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art and game, augment more traditional hobbies. There is a high level of participation in co-curricular activities. A large proportion of pupils develop their skills playing musical instruments.

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

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

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

36. Behaviour management is effective. Leaders encourage a culture where relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect and pupils are able to speak out confidently when issues occur. In the senior school, a clear tracking system allows pastoral leaders to identify behavioural trends and provide support before any issues can escalate. Leaders resolve issues in a way that provides targeted and personalised support for those affected and encourages them to reflect, resolve differences and understand each other's perspective. Leaders are committed to embedding the Quaker ethos that underpins how they manage behaviour which does not meet standards and expectations. Leaders make effective use of rewards and sanctions. As a result of these measures, pupils behave well at school, including in boarding.
37. Leaders and staff implement an effective anti-bullying strategy. This strategy includes a combination of proportionate sanctions and discussions that educate pupils about the damage that bullying can do and why all forms of bullying are unacceptable.
38. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is comprehensive and contains appropriate content. Pupils learn about protected characteristics such as age, gender and sexual orientation, and why it is important to respect these. Pupils engage enthusiastically in lessons and are confident and happy to discuss issues such as gender stereotyping and managing stress. Leaders ensure that age-appropriate information is delivered by trained staff. The 'Let your life speak' programme for Year 10 complements the PSHE programme. The programme further informs pupils about the Quaker ethos and values and how they can impact society.
39. There is an appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) programme, including for sixth-form pupils. Pupils learn about contemporary issues such as the impact of pornography, the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships and misogyny. Leaders ensure that parents are kept informed about the topics covered and invite parents to ask questions at weekly meetings.
40. The regular morning 'meetings' encourage self-reflection on spiritual and moral matters. Pupils benefit from the time and space to quietly reflect and also to hear from other members of the community. Pupils learn about a range of faiths and cultures through the theology and philosophy curriculum, in which they are encouraged to discuss religious and spiritual ideas.
41. Staff of all subjects promote pupils' development of self-esteem and self-confidence. Leaders and staff praise pupils regularly for their achievements and encourage them to put forward their ideas in lessons and general discussions. The programme of activities within both the academic curriculum and the co-curricular programme gives pupils the opportunity to express themselves freely and respectfully.
42. Leaders have developed a range of physical education (PE) activities to suit the needs of pupils. The PE programme enables pupils to develop physical fitness and balance, locomotor and ball skills. Pupils are made aware of the positive impact that exercise has on their mental wellbeing. Additional training is available for those who wish to play competitively in inter-school competitions.
43. Children below compulsory school age develop gross and fine motor skills through activities within and beyond the classroom, including weekly visits to designated local woodland areas. Staff support

children to develop their core strength, balance, co-ordination and agility. Children are encouraged to decide when they need a rest from activity.

44. Appropriate health and safety arrangements are in place. Buildings, including boarding houses, are well maintained and there is an efficient system in place for reporting any concerns relating to health and safety. The school ensures compliance with the fire regulations through measures such as regular fire evacuation drills and fire risk assessments.
45. The health centre is suitably resourced and a team of trained healthcare professionals provide appropriate medical care for pupils when required. Boarders have access to external health services such as dentistry and there is a clear system for them to receive care if they are ill or injured outside of normal school hours.
46. Pupils are appropriately supervised and visible to staff throughout the day. A clear system of signing in and out is in place for older pupils, who are permitted to leave the school site during the day. Pupils help review the risks associated with leaving the school and therefore understand the need to adhere to the advice. Boarding leaders ensure suitable levels of supervision for boarders. Early years staffing ratios are commensurate with current statutory requirements.
47. Prefects, known as 'reeves', and sixth-form pupils receive suitable training to act as role models within the community. They are confident in leading and supporting pupils within the boundaries of their responsibilities. The junior school's 'stewardship' programme is wide ranging and provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop leadership skills. Stewards assigned to the early years support the youngest learners at lunchtime. Sports stewards write and present reports in school achievement assemblies, promoting a sense of community and raising self-esteem.
48. Boarding is led by well-qualified and nurturing staff. Boarding leaders provide and oversee a warm, comfortable and suitable boarding environment in which boarders learn to live together with respect and tolerance. Boarders quickly develop trust with each other and the boarding staff.
49. The school maintains appropriate admission and attendance registers in accordance with current statutory guidance. The school informs the local education authority promptly of any pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard times of transition.

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

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

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

51. School leaders maintain a respectful and inclusive culture, based on Quaker values. This results in positive social interactions among all members of the community. Pupils learn about the harm that prejudice and discrimination can cause in society by reading and discussing topics in PSHE, such as the holocaust, genocide and apartheid. In addition, discussions on diverse perspectives support pupils to recognise stereotypes and challenge their own assumptions. Pupils learn to debate with sensitivity. Whenever their peers respond with alternative viewpoints, pupils listen and engage in discussion respectfully. This is evident in the way pupils behave in all activities and the openness with which they talk about people' protected characteristics such as race and disability.
52. The school develops pupils' financial awareness effectively. Children in the early years begin to learn about the value and function of money through role play. Junior and senior pupils learn about themes such as salaries, tax and mortgages. In the sixth form, pupils plan a personal budget to help develop their understanding of the importance of balancing any future expenditure with salary.
53. Pupils are taught about the differences between living in a country which has freedom of speech and those led by dictatorial regimes. They learn about how British democracy works, including through visits from, and debates between parliamentary candidates. Leaders ensure a balanced perspective is presented on political issues. Pupils have the opportunity to further develop their understanding through activities such as debating and Model United Nations activities. There is democratic engagement through the work of the school council where pupils' ideas for school development are discussed with school leaders and, where appropriate, changes are made. Leaders ensure that a balanced and impartial approach is taken to any discussions with political content.
54. There is a well-developed careers programme throughout the school which enables pupils to be well prepared for life beyond Bootham. In the junior school this develops from role play in early years to the use of a framework which explores different stages of life, enabling pupils to learn about different careers in an age-appropriate manner. Staff provide older pupils with up-to-date advice when choosing both GCSE and A-level subjects so that they can make informed decisions about choosing subjects that relate to particular career paths. Pupils are helped to explore a range of different pathways, including universities, apprenticeships, internships and gap years. All pupils have a chance for individual conversations with careers staff.
55. Leaders ensure that pupils are given many opportunities to learn the difference between right and wrong. In early years, role playing is used so that children understand the positive impact of helping others. In the junior school, pupils are helped to resolve disagreements peacefully and fairly. They write their own classroom rules and learn the importance of respect and empathy. In the senior school, pupils are actively involved in reviewing the behaviour policy, suggesting sanctions for those who choose to break school rules. Pupils consider ethical principles, such as the notion of 'speaking truth to power'. The school develops pupils' understanding of the importance of moral principles such as truth and integrity, including through exploration of Quaker values.
56. Pupils adopt responsible attitudes and a willingness to offer service to others. They understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those around them and to the locality in which they live. Support of local and national charities by each form enables pupils to contribute to the wider community. Pupils in Year 12 volunteer for one afternoon each week, such as by helping at a local

primary school or in a local charity shop. Pupils develop an awareness of global issues through their weekly meetings and pursue them through initiatives such as the 'Bootham environmental and sustainability team' (BEAST).

57. There is a wide-ranging programme of activities for those below school age, including regular outdoor activities such as woodland learning sessions, where children can learn more about sharing and co-operating.

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

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

## Safeguarding

59. Safeguarding is a priority at all levels of leadership. Leaders foster a culture of transparency and care to help pupils feel secure and safe at school. The safeguarding policy and procedures are in line with current statutory guidance and applied effectively.
60. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding. A designated safeguarding governor meets regularly with safeguarding leaders to discuss safeguarding issues and reports to the main board. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) provides training and updates for governors.
61. Safeguarding induction and training for staff, including the DSL and safeguarding team, are comprehensive, frequent and meet local requirements. Leaders stay informed on legislative updates and any local or national trends relating to safeguarding and child protection. Safeguarding leaders provide scenario-based training and quizzes to assess staff understanding. Staff are clear about their safeguarding duties and know how to escalate concerns when necessary. Boarding staff receive additional training related to specific safeguarding considerations related to boarding.
62. Safeguarding leaders maintain effective relationships with external professional bodies such as the local children's services, social services and police, and refer concerns to them when appropriate. Pupils are well supported during such instances of referral.
63. Safeguarding leaders respond appropriately to any concerns raised, including by staff, and ensure that pupils affected by any safeguarding issues receive suitable support. The DSL regularly checks for trends in reports received and the safeguarding team discuss whether further action is required. The DSL maintains appropriate records of safeguarding concerns and actions taken in response to these.
64. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to raise concerns personally or anonymously. Pupils are aware of trusted adults they can approach for help and are taught about the importance of reporting any concerns that they might have, including on behalf of others.
65. Thorough safer recruitment checks are completed and accurately documented in a single central record of appointments (SCR). A designated safeguarding governor reviews the SCR to ensure that appropriate safer recruitment procedures are in place.
66. Pupils are educated about how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Effective internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place, with alerts reviewed immediately by the safeguarding team to ensure swift action.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Bootham School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	816/6000
<b>Registered charity number</b>	513645
<b>Address</b>	Bootham School 51 Bootham York North Yorkshire YO30 7BU
<b>Phone number</b>	01904 623261
<b>Email address</b>	office@boothamschool.com
<b>Website</b>	www.boothamschool.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	Bootham School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Cathy Woodbine
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deneal Smith
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	623
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	62
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 January 2023

## Information about the school

68. Bootham School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. The school was founded in 1823 as a school for the sons of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, and relocated to its present site in York in 1846. It comprises the junior school, for pupils aged 3 to 11 years, which includes the early years foundation stage (EYFS), and the senior school, for pupils aged 11 to 19 years. The school is overseen by a board of governors appointed by Quakers in Yorkshire. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2023 and the current chair of governors took up her responsibilities in June 2023.
69. Boarding is offered from the age of 11 in one of three boarding houses situated on the school site.
70. There are 19 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
71. The school has identified 165 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
72. The school has identified English as an additional language for 60 pupils.
73. The school states its aims are to help all children and pupils become the best person they can be and to promote habits of hard work and high standards of personal conduct. It seeks to promote kindness and the confidence to voice opinions. The school intends to provide a fair and supportive working environment for all employees.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

11 to 13 February 2025

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

75. 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

76. 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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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)