



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**WOLVERHAMPTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Wolverhampton Grammar School

Full Name of School	<b>Wolverhampton Grammar School</b>			
DfE Number	<b>336/6023</b>			
Registered Charity Number	<b>529006</b>			
Address	<b>Wolverhampton Grammar School Compton Road Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 9RB</b>			
Telephone Number	<b>01902 421 326</b>			
Fax Number	<b>01902 421 819</b>			
Email Address	<b>head@wgs-sch.net</b>			
Head	<b>Mr Vincent Darby</b>			
Chair of Governors	<b>Dr Simon Walford</b>			
Age Range	<b>10 to 18</b>			
Total Number of Pupils	<b>626</b>			
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (378 boys; 248 girls)</b>			
Numbers by Age	10-11	<b>30</b>	11-18	<b>596</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>626</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>29 Mar 2011 to 30 Mar 2011</b>			

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in January, 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to 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 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 Wolverhampton Grammar School is a co-educational independent school for pupils between the ages of ten and eighteen years. It was founded in 1512 and moved to purpose-built accommodation on its present 23-acre site, close to Wolverhampton city centre, in 1875. As the curriculum has expanded, the original buildings have been adapted and new accommodation built. The school is a charitable trust managed by a board of governors. They 'incorporated' the school to limit the liability of the business in 2010. The school aims to be 'a busy, happy and successful community with young people, their learning, development and welfare at the heart of everything we do.' The head was appointed in 2008. Since the last inspection, a 200-seat theatre and arts centre has opened, as well as a languages suite.
- 1.2 The school consists of 626 pupils, of whom 30 are in Year 6 and 152 in the sixth form. Pupils are from diverse ethnic backgrounds and just under a quarter are Asian. Pupils are drawn from a twenty-mile radius of the school and come from families of a wide range of social, economic and religious backgrounds.
- 1.3 Admission is based on the school's own selection procedures. The average ability of pupils is above the national average, with almost all pupils above or far above the national average. Almost all pupils transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 and the majority of pupils continue their education in the sixth form after GCSE. Those who leave continue their education in local sixth-form colleges. With few exceptions, sixth-form leavers proceed to higher education. Twenty pupils do not have English as their first language, but all are proficient in written and spoken English. The school has identified 135 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 45 receive specialist learning support. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN).
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills.**

- 2.1 The school's aims are particularly well met and the pupils' overall achievements are excellent. Pupils are well educated and leave with sound values, and a breadth of skills and knowledge which will equip them to be successful adults.
- 2.2 Pupils display high levels of knowledge, skill and understanding in lessons and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They are active listeners and demonstrate a good range of oral and literacy skills. They are articulate, write fluently and express their ideas cogently. Pupils have a good grasp of mathematical and scientific concepts which they apply appropriately in subjects across the curriculum. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used confidently for research and in manipulating data. From an early age, pupils reason well and think for themselves. Their creative and artistic skills are evident throughout the school in the high quality displays of art work. These, together with participation in drama and musical productions, reinforce their appreciation of aesthetic values.
- 2.3 As Year 6 pupils are not entered for national tests at the age of eleven their attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average. On the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to age-related expectations. Pupils follow a challenging curriculum which includes three modern foreign languages and Latin. Several pupils gain scholarships in the open entrance examination for Year 7. Pupils make good progress when compared with those of similar above average ability.
- 2.4 For senior pupils, the following analysis uses the national data for 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are available. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for pupils in maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2010, results show an improvement over the previous three years, with just under three-quarters of the grades being A\* or A. At A level, results have been above the national averages for all maintained schools and maintained selective schools. The results in 2010 are broadly similar to the previous three years. Results at GCSE and A level are good in relation to pupils' ability, indicating that their progress through the school is above the average for pupils of similar above average ability, as supported by nationally standardised measures of progress. As a result of the support they receive, pupils with LDD and SEN make good progress.
- 2.5 Throughout the school, pupils develop good work habits. They take pride in their work, participate enthusiastically in lessons, persevere when solving problems, work collaboratively in groups and respond positively to challenge.
- 2.6 Pupils are successful in local and national competitions, distinguishing themselves in the Physics Olympiad, Mathematical Challenges, Arkwright Scholarships, the Engineering in Education Scheme and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Sports teams and individuals achieve high levels of success. Pupils are successful in grade examinations in drama and music. Adventurous activities at home and abroad extend pupils' experiences through participating in the coast to coast run, trekking in Peru, Spain or Poland and netball or cricket tours in Barbados.

- 2.7 Pupils' achievement is enhanced by the broad curriculum which caters for all ages and abilities, including those with LDD and SEN. The Opportunities for Assisted Learning (OpAL) programme effectively supports especially able pupils with a learning difficulty, notably dyslexia. The Year 6 curriculum places emphasis on 'learning to learn'. In Years 7 to 13, the curriculum includes three modern foreign languages, Latin and separate sciences. Through voluntary work in charity shops and assisting with reading in local schools, pupils are involved with service in the community.
- 2.8 Pupils' achievements are strongly supported by knowledgeable teaching, often of excellent quality. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace to engage and challenge pupils. Teachers plan lessons carefully, using good quality resources efficiently, to ensure that tasks and activities match pupils' learning styles. Teaching is effectively supported by ICT through the use of presentations, web-links and video clips. Marking gives pupils encouragement and usually guidance for improvement. In Year 6 standardised test information is not used to guide planning or to track pupils' progress. Effective assessment systems in Years 7 to 13 ensure that each pupil's progress is closely monitored.

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

- 2.9 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent and resonates with the school's aim to put pupils' development and their welfare at the heart of everything it does. Responding to questionnaires, a large number expressed real affection for the school and the community it provides.
- 2.10 Pupils have a well-developed sense of identity and grow in self-knowledge and self-confidence through the ethos of the school, its supportive environment and culture of praise. Pupils take full advantage of the opportunity to explore values and beliefs. They understand the importance of accommodating differences and respecting the integrity of others. Pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes right and wrong. Their moral awareness is reflected in their individual commitment to helping others and notably in their generous support for charities in this country and overseas, including a local hospice and the long established link with a school in Uganda. Pupils' social development is excellent. They grow up to be confident, poised and articulate young adults. They willingly take responsibility as team captains, monitors and prefects. Through the student parliament, pupils have opportunities to speak out and represent the views of others. They have a developing understanding of public institutions and services in England. The school is exceptionally successful in promoting a vibrant multi-cultural environment in which pupils are prepared effectively for the next stage of their lives.
- 2.11 Underpinning pupils' achievements and their personal development is excellent pastoral care, based on teachers' good knowledge of pupils, creating a positive and nurturing atmosphere. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with staff, and the high quality support they receive enables them to support others, for example through the peer mentoring scheme. Pupils are confident that they have someone to turn to, and feel well supported by teaching staff. The pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is excellent, ensuring a calm and positive atmosphere.
- 2.12 Suitable policies safeguard pupils and all staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. The comprehensive personal, social and health education programme places emphasis on personal safety, including internet safety and awareness of cyber-bullying.

- 2.13 Detailed attention is given to health and safety matters to ensure the school community benefits from a safe environment. Off-site visits are thoroughly planned. Fire procedures are well managed and documented. Arrangements for pupils who become ill are good and the medical room is comfortable and well equipped. The school encourages healthy eating and pupils understand the importance of regular exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.14 The quality of governance is excellent. Governors exercise effective oversight of the school and ensure its aims are central to its work. They are committed, knowledgeable and have a secure understanding of the school enabling them to provide high quality support and appropriate challenge. Governors provide clear strategic direction and are in regular discussion with the head about continuous improvement and development. They are effective in discharging their responsibilities for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, educational standards, financial planning and investment in high quality staff and resources. As a result of prudent financial planning over the years, the school has an excellent range of facilities including a fine, much adapted, Victorian building.
- 2.15 The quality of leadership and management at every level is excellent. The senior management team (SMT) is a cohesive group with complementary skills. Members provide a clear sense of educational direction and have a shared vision for the school's future to which all teachers have the opportunity to contribute. The SMT is energetic, setting a tone that benefits the whole school. Improved management structures have provided clearer lines of communication and more opportunities for teachers to be involved with school development. The comprehensive school development plan, to which all staff have contributed, demonstrates how the quality of pupils' education is kept under constant review. Appraisal and departmental review guide departmental planning effectively. Close attention is given to recruitment procedures and checks are conducted and recorded diligently. Support staff make an important contribution to the pupils' achievement and personal development. The administration of the school is highly efficient.
- 2.16 The school has excellent links with parents. Those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed overwhelming satisfaction with the education provided. Parents singled out for particular praise the information they receive, the subjects offered, the extra-curricular programme, pastoral care and the attitudes and values promoted. There were no significant concerns. Parents welcome the many opportunities they have to visit the school, as well as the increased use of electronic communications and the updated, easy to use website. Parents' evenings, as well as informal contacts, keep parents well informed about their children's progress. Reports do not always give a clear analysis of achievement in a subject, or what should be done to improve. The parents' association promotes many well-supported social and fund-raising events. All the required information for parents of pupils and prospective pupils is available on the website. The school has a suitable procedure for handling complaints.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Improve the use of assessment data in Year 6 in order to monitor and track pupils' progress and guide planning.
  2. Revise the quality of reporting to the standard of the best to include more subject analysis and related guidance on ways to improve.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed a small sample of 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, 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**

Mrs Margaret Banks

Reporting Inspector

Mr David Woodward

Deputy head, HMC school