



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Bancroft's School

March 2022

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School's Details

School	Bancroft's School			
DfE number	317/6063			
Registered charity number	1068532			
Address	Bancroft's School 611–627 High Road Woodford Green Essex IG8 ORF			
Telephone number	0208 559 0032			
Email address	office@bancrofts.org			
Headmaster	Mr Simon Marshall			
Chair of governors	Mr Ed Sautter			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	852			
	Seniors	623	Sixth Form	229
Inspection dates	1 to 4 March 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Bancroft's school is a co-educational day school on the north east edge of London. Founded in 1737, it moved to its present site in 1889. The school is a charitable trust, administered by a governing body and is divided into three sections: the lower school for pupils aged 11 to 13, the middle school for pupils aged 13 to 16, and the sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 18 years. The governing body retains representation from the Worshipful Company of Drapers who founded the school in east London in the 18th century. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to encourage pupils to be intellectually curious, to treat others with kindness, and to be true to themselves as well as courageous. It aims to nurture excellence by challenging pupils to achieve their full potential, whilst maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from families with a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly from London and the surrounding counties. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 97 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 77 pupils, none of whom require additional support. Data provided by the school identifies many pupils who are more able and the curriculum is modified for them and for others with special talents in sport, music or drama.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 FOCUSED 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; 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 standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2021 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships and sex education, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 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

- 2.12 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.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is 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.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 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 successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 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.

2.19 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.

The headline judgements apply 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:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Third form	Year 7
Remove form	Year 8
Lower fourth form	Year 9
Upper fourth form	Year 10
Fifth form	Year 11

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils display exemplary and aspirational attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding develop to an extremely high level as they move through the school.
- Pupils are excellent communicators; their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are extremely well developed.
- Pupils make significant progress from their starting points, especially in lessons where active contribution is encouraged.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils' spiritual understanding and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life are excellent.
- Pupils are naturally inclusive and demonstrate a particularly strong acceptance of those who have a different background or belief to their own.
- Pupils' social development is excellent; they collaborate with ease in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils display an extremely strong moral awareness and have a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Recommendation

The school should make the following improvement:

- Ensure that pupils are consistently challenged to work at greater depth and to develop their critical thinking skills to the fullest extent in all lessons.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.3 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.4 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are ambitious and aspirational and are keen to find ways to improve their attainment and to deepen their understanding. In almost all lessons, pupils seek to collaborate with one another instinctively to complete tasks and to solve problems. In English, for example, pupils worked together highly effectively to discuss and critique model answers. In history, pupils eagerly debated and challenged each other's interpretation of evidence to reach a highly detailed, subtly nuanced and much enhanced understanding of Stalin's character. Throughout the school, pupils constantly look to improve their work and to hone their skills, as seen in a geography lesson where pupils questioned incisively and persistently to ensure they fully grasped the best methodology in answering examination questions. Pupils of all ages set ambitious but realistic targets for themselves, encouraged and supported by their teachers, who offer excellent feedback in lessons and in pupils' workbooks. When given opportunity, pupils love to take charge of their learning and to extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the narrow confines of examination specifications, as seen in a physics lesson where pupils linked images from radio telescopes to visualise the formation of galaxies. Pupils' written work across all subjects, reflects their obvious pride in completing tasks thoroughly and the effort they make to produce high-quality responses to assignments.
- 3.5 Pupils display extremely well-developed study skills. They think critically, question incisively and analyse logically. In geography, for example, pupils expertly interpreted data on sand dunes, synthesising their knowledge of different coastal erosion patterns to hypothesise how the coast and sand dunes would change in the future. In biology, pupils extended and deepened their understanding of gene operation, by asking highly focused questions and employing powerful reasoning. Pupils are highly proficient at using their prior knowledge to enhance their understanding of new topics. In physics, for example, pupils used their knowledge of the properties of gases expertly to hypothesise about the nature of a gas at an extremely low temperature. In a few lessons, where the teaching was more directive and narrowly exam-focused, pupils were not able to employ their critical thinking skills to explore ideas in depth or to take charge of their own learning and, as a result, their progress was more limited.
- 3.6 The overall achievement of pupils demonstrates excellent progress and successful fulfilment of the school's aims to nurture excellence and to encourage all pupils to achieve their full potential. GCSE results in 2018 to 2019 were well above the national average with over half the grades awarded at grade nine. Centre- and teacher-assessed grades in 2020 and 2021 show that this performance has been sustained. Similarly at A level results in 2018 and 2019 were well above the national average with over two thirds of grades awarded at A* or A. In 2020 and 2021 centre- and teacher-assessed grades show similar attainment. Data provided by the school indicate that almost all pupils at both GCSE and A level exceed the expected grades for their ability, demonstrating excellent progress. Pupils' outstanding progress is supported by the highly effective tracking and assessment procedures provided by the school to monitor pupils' progress and to measure their attainment.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages are excellent communicators. They are fluent, articulate and adept at using language carefully to express complex ideas in lessons. In a religious studies lesson, pupils reflected sensitively on Buddhist concepts and discussed eloquently how suffering affects peoples' perspectives on life. In modern language lessons, pupils spoke fluently and with great confidence, also displaying excellent listening skills. Pupils' use of technical vocabulary is excellent as seen in a further mathematics lesson where pupils explained differential equations clearly and precisely using correct mathematical terms. Out of lessons, pupils engage in conversation naturally and enthusiastically with one another and with adults, showing engaging humour as well as sensitivity and a depth of understanding of more serious

issues. Pupils' listening skills are excellent. In all lessons pupils are deeply attentive and listen carefully to instructions. In a physical education lesson, highly enthusiastic pupils instantly stopped to receive further instruction before continuing to practise floor gymnastics and, in drama, pupils listened carefully to increasingly complex instructions, when exploring sequenced physical work. In discussion groups and meetings, pupils listen sensitively to others' opinions before offering their own and they often add to others' views to reach a shared understanding. Pupils' written work displays extremely high levels of literacy, exhibiting clear structure, excellent control of language and the ability to write analytically, creatively and coherently.

- 3.8 Pupils of all ages display excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects. In their questionnaires, a very large majority of pupils felt their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons. Evidence from lesson observations, pupil interviews and the scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed these views. In chemistry, pupils demonstrated an excellent knowledge of oxidation reactions and in history pupils had an excellent level of knowledge on which to base their analysis of British election patterns in the 1960s. Pupils have a deep understanding of their subjects, often beyond the level expected for their age, reflecting their natural curiosity. For example, in Latin, pupils displayed an outstanding understanding of Latin infinitives in all their forms, tenses and voices. In electronics, pupils had a sophisticated and purposeful understanding of the components they were using. Pupils demonstrate extremely strong skills in many subject areas. In design technology, for example, pupils were highly adept in using tools to produce a circular polo shape in wood and, in a swimming lesson, pupils were particularly skilful when demonstrating a precise technique in their front crawl strokes. Pupils' development of excellent knowledge, skills and understanding is enabled by teachers who are committed to helping pupils to improve and achieve their full potential, especially in public examinations.
- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate extremely strong skills in numeracy. In mathematics, pupils were able to hypothesise about the efficiency of their methods for solving problems and to analyse the relative efficiency of different methods, reflecting a deep understanding of concepts and principles. Pupils of all ages apply mathematical skills with natural ease across their subjects. In physics, for example, pupils displayed high-order mathematical reasoning to explain the behaviour of sub-atomic particles and, in history, pupils showed an extremely strong ability to analyse statistical data, when considering voting patterns. Throughout the school, pupils' evident enjoyment of mathematics is facilitated through their regular involvement and success in various external competitions.
- 3.10 Pupils have good ICT skills. In a computer science lesson, pupils showed a good level of understanding in designing a flow chart to illustrate an algorithm. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively across the curriculum to enhance or support their learning through note-making in lessons and as a tool for research. In design technology, pupils were skilful in using software to design products and to evaluate different solutions before beginning a project and, in geography, pupils used software effectively to plot graphs and represent data. Similarly, in music, pupils showed a good ability to use software to create, notate and replay their compositions.
- 3.11 Pupils reach an extremely high level of achievement in a range of physical and creative activities. Pupils' lives are enriched by the many opportunities provided by the school to compete in sport, to perform in drama and music, to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme (DofE), to join the combined cadet force (CCF) or to enjoy the wide range of clubs and societies. School teams have enjoyed national success in netball and hockey and individual pupils play rugby, cricket and tennis at regional level. Results in mathematics and science Olympiads are outstanding. In drama and music, many pupils achieve high grades in examinations and perform at prestigious venues. In response to their questionnaires, almost all parents felt that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities and inspection evidence confirms that most pupils enjoy busy and successful lives beyond the classroom.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.13 Pupils are extremely self-confident, without any hint of arrogance. Pupils understand themselves and their needs very well. For example, pupils recognise a growing need to support pupils with mental health concerns and are appreciative of the increased provision of counselling facilitated by the leadership and management of the school. Pupils have an extremely mature understanding of their academic strengths and relative weaknesses because teachers' expectations are clear and the excellent feedback on pupils' work helps them to reflect and to set personal targets for improvement. Pupils show extremely strong self-discipline, resilience and tenacity in pursuing their goals, constantly seeking guidance and advice from staff. Pupil leaders display a high level of self-esteem, relishing any opportunity to assume a position of responsibility in sport, the combined cadet force or to run a society. In interviews, pupils spoke enthusiastically about how proud they are of their school and the opportunities it offers them to prepare for the next stage in their lives.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages are acutely aware of the importance of making good decisions about their careers. They value the support of the school in helping them to choose subjects that suit their interests and talents rather than choices aimed at a particular career or profession. Pupils spoke wisely about the need to make appropriate choices in their personal lives and most pupils felt that the school's *Learning for Life* programme has helped them to be better informed and more aware of the importance of respect and sensitivity in personal relationships. Pupils are keen to express their views and influence decisions through the pupil-led *Congress* and although a small minority of pupils felt the school does not listen to their views, pupils have recently been consulted about changing the uniform, shaping lunch menus, discussing the school's behaviour management policy, and appointing members of staff. In lessons, pupils make mature decisions when planning their work, as seen in drama where pupils had a sophisticated understanding of how individual and collective decisions might impact the outcome of their devised pieces.
- 3.15 Pupils have an excellent and deep spiritual awareness of the non-material aspects of life. Pupils of all faiths and none value the opportunity for quiet reflection in chapel, described by one pupil as 'an oasis for contemplation'. Pupils who wish to express or explore their faith appreciate enormously the various opportunities for worship and discussion provided through the chapel, the Muslim assembly, the Jewish society and the multi-faith prayer room. Pupils are supported in their spiritual development by staff who take obvious pride in the diversity of the school's population and prioritise contemplation and reflection over the promotion of any particular faith or belief. Pupils have a strong appreciation of music and art, nurtured through house meetings and assemblies, where pupils regularly perform, and through high-quality pupil artwork around the school.
- 3.16 Pupils display an extremely strong moral understanding and a deeply-rooted awareness of right and wrong. They respect the school rules and understand the importance of accepting responsibility for their own behaviour. Of those pupils who responded to the questionnaire, all felt the school expected them to behave well but a small minority felt that pupils do not always treat each other with kindness or respect. Inspectors raised these concerns in conversation with a significant proportion of pupils, almost all of whom expressed a contrary view. Pupils felt that, on the very rare occasions when unkindness occurs, it stems from a natural and mostly healthy competitiveness to achieve high grades. Pupils' behaviour in lessons, between lessons, in the lunch queue and around school at break and lunchtimes, is impeccable. Pupils are unfailingly courteous and respectful in their interactions with their peers and with staff. These values of mutual courtesy and kindness are modelled by supportive staff, who create a strong sense of community within the school.
- 3.17 Pupils' social development is excellent. They work together extremely well, understanding how to achieve common goals and how to solve problems successfully. Pupils collaborate instinctively and purposefully in lessons and activities to improve their learning and to achieve shared objectives. This was demonstrated in design technology, where pupils offered highly constructive feedback on each

other's designs, and in art, where pupils sensitively and perceptively offered fellow pupils advice to improve their painting. In form periods, pupils clearly enjoy one another's company, and relish the opportunities to compete in quizzes or share their experiences. In a meeting to discuss preparations for the forthcoming *International Women's Week*, pupils displayed a high degree of collaboration and organisation as they planned events and allocated roles. Pupils work together with considerable success to produce a number of school-based magazines and publications, and pupils collaborate highly effectively in a wide range of house competitions and activities.

- 3.18 Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and, when opportunities allow, to the wider community. They embrace responsibilities readily at house and school level and willingly take the lead in organising charitable events. Pupils' support for the local foodbank is immense as is their enthusiasm to fund-raise for a variety of local and international projects. Pupils are keen to volunteer to support local primary schools, through leading lessons and activities, and by acting as life-guards and helpers when local children use the school pool. Within school, pupils lead societies and activities, showing a highly-developed sense of community-spirit. Individual pupils regularly take the lead in directing drama productions or leading musical groups. Some older pupils volunteer as mentors for younger pupils and, where these relationships work well, considerable mutual benefits accrue. Pupils are hugely supported in their personal development by enthusiastic house staff who facilitate many events and promote an ethos of service within and beyond the school community.
- 3.19 Pupils have a profound understanding of cultural diversity. A clear sense of mutual respect and appreciation of one another emerges naturally as pupils from many different backgrounds learn and work well together. In religious studies lessons, pupils share beliefs and debate moral issues, affirming one another whilst appreciating different perspectives. Pupils of all ages understand and respect the importance of well-established groups to discuss issues of race, religion, LGBTQ+ and women's rights, and benefit from the influence of these groups in creating a sense of inclusiveness within the school community. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by the school leadership's encouragement of pupils from all faiths and none to lead assemblies and collective activities that promote and celebrate diversity within the school community.
- 3.20 Pupils have a good sense of how to stay safe and healthy. They display an extremely secure knowledge of on-line safety because they are well educated about the risks. Pupils who have a clear academic focus also appreciate the importance of maintaining a balanced lifestyle, reflecting the aim of the school to encourage pupils to develop a broad range of interests. Pupils clearly understand the importance of physical exercise to complement their academic studies. Many take the opportunity to participate in voluntary fitness and exercise sessions alongside the compulsory games curriculum. Pupils are highly sensitive to their own mental health needs and a few pupils felt that the school's support for pupils' mental well-being, whilst increasing through the provision of additional counsellors, still does not yet fully meet demand. Pupils are aware of the need to maintain a healthy diet and they enjoy the wide range of nutritious food available at lunchtimes.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with 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 house form meetings, chapel and house assemblies. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Holliday	Reporting inspector
Mrs Valerie Stewart	Compliance team inspector (Former assistant principal, ISA school)
Mr James Dahl	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Christopher Hall	Team inspector (Quality assurance inspector for international campuses, HMC school)
Mr Alex Osiatynski	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Mrs Claire Preece	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Simon Wilson	Team Inspector (Former head, HMC school)