



## Senior School Admissions to Bury Grammar School September 2021

### The Bury Grammar School Ethos

Bury Grammar School is a leading UK school and one of the oldest schools in the country.

We enjoy being a warm, welcoming and forward-looking school which focusses on quality, tradition and innovation.



The school of first choice for pupils, parents and staff in the area, we view Bury Grammar School's history with pride and its future with optimism.



### Our School Aims

#### *Scholarship*

To challenge and inspire pupils to work hard, aim high and achieve and to provide an excellent learning environment where each pupil values academic success and where achievement is celebrated by all.

#### *Character*

To foster intellectual curiosity, generosity of spirit, self-belief, confidence, resilience, flexibility, a sense of duty and service and a caring and tolerant outlook.

#### *Enrichment*

To encourage all pupils to participate in a wide range of activities, developing an all-round approach to their education and a lifelong love of learning.

#### *Partnerships*

To look out to the world with optimism, forge positive partnership and learn to play an engaging role in society at a local, national and global level, preparing for lives in an ever-changing world.



## **An important change to Year 7 admissions to Bury Grammar School for September 2021 entry – the entrance examination is replaced by academic assignments**

Our number one priority for our pupils, parents and staff is to keep them safe. With this in mind, admissions to Bury Grammar Senior School will, this year, follow a revised format.

While our preference would be for applicants to set an entrance exam, we do not think this is an advisable strategy in view of the current pandemic: we have therefore decided to avoid the potential risk of inviting hundreds of young people into BGS from up to 200 different primary schools.

Having carefully considered how Year 6 families might be feeling at the moment, we hope that the early decision not to hold an entrance exam provides some certainty at a challenging time. Young people's well-being will always be a top priority for us.

Our **high standards as a leading UK grammar school** mean that the admissions process, we are putting in place for 2021 entry remains a rigorous one. Please find an outline below.

- **Academic assignment.** Each candidate will be asked to complete an independent piece of written work chosen from a number of academic titles set by the School. Parents will be asked to verify this is the candidate's own work and the candidate will be asked about the written piece at the interview stage.
- **Essay.** Candidates will be asked to write a piece about themselves, their interests and their ambitions.
- **Academic levels of attainment** - as submitted by the candidate's current teacher(s). These may be predicted SAT's grades for candidates applying from state primary schools or alternative equivalent levels of attainment.
- **Reference.** This would be reference from the candidate's primary school, focusing on their attitude to learning, aptitude, character and suitability for a grammar school education.
- **Pupil's school report.** We will be asking for a copy of the candidate's last full school report.
- **Interview** between the candidate and a Senior Teacher, during which the academic assessment will be discussed. The candidate will also be invited to bring along any recent work of which they are proud and to talk through with us their aims and ambitions for the future.
- **Meeting** between the candidate's parents and a Senior Teacher to discuss parents' approach to education and their aspirations for their child's future.

N.B. Should the circumstances at the time not allow for a face-to-face meeting, then the interview and meeting may take place via Zoom, Teams or the telephone.



## **How exactly will candidates be ranked?**

Six key elements make up the admissions process:

- Academic assignment
- Essay
- Academic attainment levels
- Reference
- School report
- Interview

The candidate will be assessed according to a number of different criteria at each part of the process and the final outcome, along with any information which comes to light during the meeting with parents, will allow us to put candidates in a clear rank order.

## **But surely nothing can tell you more than an exam?**

We would dispute this. The six key elements of the admissions process will give us a great deal of information – and no exam is infallible.

The most prestigious universities have traditionally adopted the approach of a viva following the submission of a piece of work to assess prospective undergraduates; this is not dissimilar to the approach we will be taking through the academic assignment and interview.

Given that the grammar school education we offer is dependent upon pupils progressing at a rapid rate, it would be unfair to offer a place at Bury Grammar School to pupils who are not able to meet these high standards; mindful of our duty of care towards young people, we take our responsibility to admitting the right candidates very seriously indeed.

Furthermore, at a time when GCSE and A Level grades have been awarded based on teacher assessment and without sitting any exams (something which would previously have been unthinkable) this development is a sensible alternative in unprecedented times.

## **What if parents and pupils were looking forward to the challenge presented by an exam and would have liked to know the results?**

The rules of the Manchester Consortium of Schools mean that independent schools in the area are not permitted to let you know the result, grade or outcome of any of the papers sat in their entrance exam: even in a 'normal' year, the results of the entrance exam are not revealed.

We would argue that admission to BGS presents a challenge, with or without an entrance exam – but one we hope you are looking forward to facing!

Education is also about so much more than sitting exams; our ethos and school aims reflect this approach and, in this respect, our admission procedures for 2021 are very much in line with our school ethos.



**So does this mean BGS is not focussed on exams? What about preparation for GCSEs and A Levels in a few years' times?**

Not at all. We have many expert teachers and examiners in school who make it their professional aim to ensure fabulous results. Please view our exam results on our [School Website](#) to see that our pupils routinely achieve the highest grades – often beyond their own and their families' expectations.

Over the last few years, it has become the pattern for more than half of our students to achieve A and A\* grades at A Level and the average BGS grade at GCSE equates to an A (grade 7). Our teachers are highly successful at preparing pupils for external examinations, enabling them to go on to prestigious university courses and top careers. We are very ambitious indeed for our young people and will give them every support possible to help them achieve the highest grades.

**You've taken the decision to avoid putting pupils at risk by opting not to run an entrance exam. What has been your approach to opening the school during the pandemic? Are you particularly cautious?**

Our pupils' safety is always our top priority, but we are very proud that we were able to overcome the very many challenges we faced back in May/June 2020 and invite ALL our primary and senior pupils back into school for some learning in the Summer Term 2020. We think we were the exception in being able to do this as a school.

We are also very happy to report that everyone has also returned safely to school full-time this Autumn Term: our staff have worked very hard to find ingenious solutions which enable us to continue educating ALL our pupils face-to-face FULL TIME. So, we are not overly cautious, no – but we would have concerns about 300+ pupils visiting us for an entrance exam from potentially more than 200 different primary schools.

Having said this, parents may wish to be aware that our status as a Microsoft school meant that we were able to offer high quality remote learning through live lessons and online tutorials.



## What is the timeline for 11+ admissions?

Please see the key dates in the table below.

|         |                                   |  |
|---------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Stage 1 | October 30 <sup>th</sup> 2020     | Submission of application                                  |
|         | November 30 <sup>th</sup> 2020    | Submission of academic assessment and essay                |
|         | By December 21 <sup>st</sup> 2020 | Invitation to interview sent out, if successful at Stage 1 |
| Stage 2 | January and February 2021         | Interviews with candidate and meetings with parents        |
| Stage 3 | 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2021    | Offers made  |
|         | 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2021        | Deadline for acceptance of place                           |

## Can you tell me more about the academic assignment which pupils submit?

Candidates will be asked to submit a written piece of no more than 500 words. There will be a range of titles from which the candidate can choose; these titles will be available from the Admissions Office once an application has been received.

It must of course be the candidate's own work and we will ask parents to confirm this is the case.

### And the essay?

Candidates will be asked to submit an essay about themselves of no more than 300 words.

We would like to know more about the candidate's interests, character, aspirations and hopes for their new Senior School. This must also of course be the candidate's own work and we will ask parents to confirm this is the case.

## What form will the pupil interview take?

The aims of the interview with the candidate are to ascertain

- Level of ability
- Extent to which the pupil would thrive in a grammar school environment
- Desire to learn and to persevere
- Interest and passions
- Curiosity of spirit and interest in the world
- Extent to which the pupil is excited by ideas and can think creatively
- Likelihood of enjoying the atmosphere and challenges of BGS. (This is most pupils!)

## How do you suggest my child copes with possible nerves before their interview?

Please be reassured that we will do our very best to put them at ease. We have so much experience in putting pupils at ease we would encourage you and your child not to worry too much. We also have no interest whatsoever in trying to trip anyone up or catch them out – we simply want to get to know you!



### **What is the purpose of the meeting with parents?**

To help parents and the school make one of the most important decisions which will ever be taken for the child.

We want above all for our young people to be well-educated, happy, fulfilled and in *the right school for them* – so this meeting will focus on the aims, ambitions and character of the candidate, parents' aspirations and the extent to which parents share BGS's approach to learning. After all, the home-school partnership will not work if we are not all on the same page!

We hope to really take the time to explore in some depth what you want for your child and what is best for their future.

### **What if the circumstances in the New Year mean that it is not possible to hold interviews in person?**

We do hope a face-to-face meeting is possible as one-to-one interactions with families would seem to be relatively low risk, but, should it be necessary, we would hold interviews via Teams, Zoom or over the telephone.

### **What if the pandemic is over by January 2021? Will you reinstate the exam?**

No. We wish to give families certainty about what is going to happen so you can have peace of mind. We are happy that the process we have established is a thorough and fair one – and, furthermore, a kind process given the current stresses and challenges families are facing.

Submission of the essay before Christmas also means that preparations for a January exam will not be dominating your Christmas break.

### **How do I make an application for my child?**

**All applications must be made by 30th October 2020.**

[Please complete the application form on the school's website and we will then get back in touch with you.](#)

### **How can I find out more about the admissions process?**

Please visit our [School Website](#) or contact our Senior School Registrar on 0161 696 8600 or email [admissions@burygrammar.com](mailto:admissions@burygrammar.com).

### **How can I find out more about BGS? Can I visit the school?**

Our website has a great deal of information and we will soon be launching a virtual tour we hope you will like.

Yes, we would love you to visit and we have arranged tours for families to come and see us as safely on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> October (circumstances allowing). The Admissions Department would be very happy to book you in if you email [admissions@burygrammar.com](mailto:admissions@burygrammar.com) or visit our [School Website](#).

### **How many applicants do you think you'll have?**

Bury Grammar School has grown considerably over the last few years and demand for places is high. We now have four forms in both the Boys' and Girls' Schools and expect there to be well over 300 applicants.

### **How many places are available?**

There are likely to be between 30 and 50 places available to external applicants in each school.

### **Anything else?**

Yes – we completely understand how important the choice of Senior School is for you and we hope to make the admissions process enjoyable and informative. We are aware we are working with impressionable young people with hopes and dreams who want the opportunity to show us their best.

Our senior leaders very much enjoy playing a full part in getting to know the next generation of pupils and we will be absolutely thrilled to meet you!

P.S. High standards do not mean we are unfriendly!



If you would like further information or would like to speak to one of us, please don't hesitate to see our website or ring Bury Grammar School on 0161 696 8600.

*We look forward to getting to know you!*

BGS 16 09 20

