



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Christ Church Cathedral School

Full Name of School	<b>Christ Church Cathedral School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>931/6060</b>		
Address	<b>Christ Church Cathedral School 3 Brewer Street Oxford Oxfordshire OX1 1QW</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01865 242561</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01865 202945</b>		
Email Address	<b>schooloffice@cccs.org.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Mr Martin Bruce</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>The Very Revd Christopher Lewis</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>152</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>45</b>	5-11: <b>87</b> 11-13: <b>20</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>131</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>21</b>	
	Full:	<b>17</b>	Weekly: <b>4</b>
Inspection dates	<b>29 Jan 2013 to 31 Jan 2013</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS). The inspection occurs over a period of two and a half continuous days in the school.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. From September 2011 the inspection of boarding welfare forms part of the inspection process. This inspection focuses on the school's compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in January 2009 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors 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.

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgement.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors conducted formal interviews with boarders, held discussions with senior members of staff, with the vice-chair of governors and with the acting cathedral safeguarding officer, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and boarding pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Jan Preece

Mr Anthony Hobson

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding (Boarding  
Housemaster, IAPS school)

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Christ Church Cathedral School in Oxford was founded in 1546 by Henry VIII to educate the eight choristers of the newly constructed Christ Church. It moved to its current premises opposite the college in the 19th century and began to admit non-choristers. It now provides education for boys from three to thirteen years of age, although the Nursery also admits girls. Most pupils come from business and professional families from a wide area around Oxford and a few boarders come from further away. The school is on a compact site but has the use of extensive playing fields in nearby Christ Church Meadow. Governance is provided by the Dean and Canons of Christ Church who have established a governing committee. The committee is made up of members of the cathedral chapter and advisory governors drawn from relevant professional fields. The school's main function is to educate and be the home of the cathedral choristers, all of whom are boarders. It also educates the choristers of Worcester College Chapel, who are all day boys. Music is therefore a major part of school life.
- 1.2 The school aims to develop the whole child so that every pupil can succeed. It seeks to provide a stimulating, challenging and exciting environment and get the best from every child by setting high standards and focusing on the child as an individual. Through a positive, encouraging and achieving atmosphere, the school aims to establish good manners and courtesy and promote appreciation of, and respect for, difference, so that everyone feels valued and an important part of the community.
- 1.3 There are currently 152 pupils on the school roll, of whom 45 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but 30 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, of whom 19 receive specialist support in school. Support is also provided for all of the six pupils for whom English is an additional language. When they leave the school, pupils either move on to senior schools in Oxford or others, particularly those who win awards, transfer to senior boarding schools around the country.
- 1.4 The school provides boarding accommodation for the choristers of Christ Church, on the upper floors of the main school house. At the time of inspection there were 21 boarders. The four probationer choristers go home at weekends. Since the previous inspection there have been no significant changes in boarding provision, other than some changes in staffing. Boarding is overseen by an acting housemaster who is supported by a team of resident boarding tutors and matrons. The school aims to create for each boarder a caring extended family environment where children feel safe and valued in a homely and supportive atmosphere.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. SUMMARY**

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

2.1 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, and therefore it must:

- ensure that when a disclosure is accepted from other employment, a new check against the barred list is made [National Minimum Standard 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults].

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

2.2 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Make arrangements for boarders to formally offer their suggestions and concerns, and ensure that the school's response is communicated to them.
2. Ensure that all boarding staff take up opportunities for external professional development in relation to boarding.

### **(iii) Progress since the previous inspection**

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection that was undertaken by Ofsted in January 2009 made seven recommendations. These related to the handling of medicines; ensuring that safeguarding policies conform to local safeguarding board guidelines and ensuring that cathedral staff receive safeguarding training; the use of trays for boarders' meals; ensuring that cathedral staff had the same recruitment checks as school staff; introducing the independent listener to boarders; implementing an on-going programme of improvements in the boarding house and reviewing the role of housemaster to gain greater consistency in care for boarders. These have all been addressed.

### **3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS**

#### **3.(a) Boarding provision and care**

- 3.1 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 Boarders say that they are well supported when starting boarding. A chorister guide on the website assists their preparation and each is allocated a mentor to be their friend and guide. During their probationary year choristers go home at the weekend to ease their transition to full boarding. Boarders have a choice of approachable people to offer support. The independent listener is known to older boarders through his cathedral role and now visits the school to aid recognition. His contact details, together with external helplines, are displayed by the boarders' telephone. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Medical arrangements are overseen efficiently by two matrons who between them provide twenty-four hour care. They implement clear policies for first aid and medication and ensure that records are maintained correctly and medicines are stored securely, an improvement since the previous inspection. They arrange essential ancillary medical treatment if parents are unable to do so. They maintain appropriate oversight of the few boarders who self-medicate and ensure that boarders' rights to confidentiality are respected. Accommodation for boarders who are ill is suitable, although they usually return home. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Since many boarders are from the local area, they are able to see family members at cathedral services and also in free time at the weekend. Boarders have access to a suitably private house phone and older boys are allowed mobile phones under proper supervision. All boarders have an email address and daily access to a computer. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is comfortably furnished, clean and well maintained and has suitable toilet and shower facilities. The school has attended to improvements suggested at the previous inspection. Boarders appreciate being able to bring their own bedding and many choose to personalise their sleeping areas with photographs and posters. They have ready access to work areas such as the computer room, reference library and a classroom. All available space is efficiently used for instrumental practice. Boarders have a bright and spacious common room and additional space to play table games. Whilst some recreational areas are used during the school day for teaching purposes, the dormitory floor is restricted to use by boarders. Access to the house is secure and surveillance equipment contributes to boarders' security without intruding on their privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of boarders responded with a negative view about the food, although a food council meets regularly with the domestic bursar. Boarders, including those with particular dietary needs, are provided with varied, nutritious and plentiful meals, which the majority of them in discussion said they enjoy. Inspectors agree that the food is of a suitable quantity and quality. A recommendation at the previous inspection was to re-consider the use of the blue compartmental trays for boarders' meals. Senior managers decided, after discussion, to continue using these trays throughout the day. Arrangements for the preparation and serving of meals are hygienic, although the use of these trays for boarders' breakfast and supper does not contribute to the homely ambiance the school seeks to create. Boarders are provided with sufficient snacks, such as that between choir practice and evensong. A drink or cereal is available before bedtime. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Boarders' clothing and bedding are efficiently laundered within the house and they say that arrangements work well. Personal or stationery items are obtained through house staff. Personal possessions can be safely stored in lockable bedside cupboards and pocket money and valuables are kept securely by the staff. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders are happy with the range of activities offered in free time and at weekends. Helpful timetabling enables them to participate in school clubs. Due to their chorister commitments they lead busy lives and appreciate having short periods of time to relax with an activity of their own choosing, either outside or indoors. Some reported that the games tables need maintenance. Boarders have regular access to a newspaper and television as well as the internet, to gain an awareness of current affairs. [NMS 10]

### **3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding**

- 3.9 The school does not meet one of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school employs thorough arrangements for boarders' health and safety. The site risk assessment is suitable and equipment is regularly checked for safety. Risk assessments, undertaken by the school and the cathedral, ensure boarders' safety on trips and tours. Boarding staff are aware of safe working practice and how to respond in an emergency. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school has appropriate procedures to ensure fire safety. Boarders and staff know what to do in the event of a fire and fire drills are carried out regularly, including at night. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Child protection procedures, including those for when the choristers are in the cathedral, are well understood and implemented, and since the previous inspection conform with locally agreed inter-agency procedures. Cathedral staff working with boarders now undergo the same checks as for school staff and receive safeguarding training. All staff receive appropriate training in child protection and the designated person maintains close links with the local safeguarding children board. Governors monitor safeguarding carefully. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 A range of effective school policies promotes good behaviour. Boarders earn rewards for co-operative and helpful behaviour and report that sanctions beyond a reprimand are rarely necessary. Whilst some parents' and pupils' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed unhappiness about the effectiveness with which the school deals with bullying, most boarders say that anti-bullying procedures are effective in addressing the rare case. Detailed records are kept of all behavioural incidents and inspectors believe that they are dealt with constructively. Any behavioural issues and strategies are discussed at regular staff meetings which both academic and boarding staff attend, and feedback is shared with the cathedral staff. During the inspection relationships within the boarding house were seen to be positive, creating a warm, friendly and supportive atmosphere. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 All staff, including those from the cathedral's music department, have undergone the required recruitment checks including through the Disclosure and Barring Service. However, when the school has accepted a disclosure relating to previous employment, it has failed to undertake its own check against the barred list. Visitors do not have unsupervised access to the boarding accommodation nor to boarders. [NMS 14]

**3.(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision**

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 Boarding practice observed reflects the school's aims for boarding, which are displayed in the common room and on the website. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The headmaster has overall responsibility for boarding, which is delegated to the acting housemaster, and this role has been reviewed since the previous inspection to ensure greater consistency in the support given, and the care shown, to boarders. Boarding staff complete an annual self-evaluation, which informs part of the school development plan. Strong links between boarders' academic, chorister and pastoral needs are maintained due to the housemaster and tutors having teaching or singing responsibilities in addition to their boarding roles. Boarding staff have suitable experience and all the required boarding records are correctly maintained. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have detailed job descriptions and receive appropriate induction training. Whilst appraisal sets objectives which include the boarding role, not all boarding staff have undertaken opportunities to develop their expertise through external boarding training. Boarders are supervised by appropriate numbers of staff and know who is responsible for them. Staff know where boarders are at all times and the school has a suitable policy should a boarder go missing. Boarders can easily contact either of the two staff who sleep in the boarding house, and do not have access to staff accommodation. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders say that they are looked after well and do not experience any discrimination. They enjoy being choristers and nearly all like the experience of boarding. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 The school has made progress in securing boarders' views since the previous inspection, such as through regular informal conversations in the house and the food council. However, in responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire a majority felt that their views are not sufficiently noted and in interviews some expressed a wish for a suggestions box. Inspectors agree that current arrangements to receive and respond to boarders' views are not yet formalised or fully developed. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school's complaints procedure is available to parents on the website. Whilst a minority of parents were dissatisfied with the timely responses to their questions and the school's handling of concerns, records of complaints show that concerns are recorded carefully and addressed according to the school's protocols. Most parents of boarders are very satisfied with the opportunities to contact the boarding and cathedral staff. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects do not have formal roles in boarding although they are expected to set a good example to younger boarders and help staff in the efficient running of the house. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings. [NMS 20, not applicable]