



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL SCHOOL**

**FEBRUARY 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>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>Email address</b>	schooloffice@cccs.org.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Richard Murray			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	The Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	161			
	<b>Boys</b>	156	<b>Girls</b>	5
	<b>Day pupils</b>	142	<b>Boarders</b>	19
	<b>EYFS</b>	30	<b>Y1- Y6</b>	97
	<b>Y7 &amp; Y8</b>	34		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8 to 9 February 2017			

## PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

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.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the vice-chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support area. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Bridget Windley

Reporting inspector

Mrs Gillian Proctor

Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)

Mrs Cathy Gainer

Team inspector for boarding (Head of boarding, IAPS school)

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## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Christ Church Cathedral School in Oxford provides education for boys from two to thirteen years of age, although the Nursery also admits girls. Founded in 1546 by Henry VIII, the school's purpose was to educate the eight choristers of the newly founded Christ Church College. In the 19th century the school moved to its current premises opposite the college and began to admit non-choristers. The Dean and Canons of Christ Church College, who are responsible for the school's governance, have established a governing committee which comprises members of the cathedral chapter and advisory governors drawn from relevant professional fields. The school provides education and accommodation for the cathedral choristers, all of whom are boarders. It also educates the choristers of Worcester College Chapel, who are all day boys. The school is on a compact site, but has the use of extensive playing fields in nearby Christ Church Meadow.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, a new head and a new chairman of governors have been appointed.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.3 By focusing on the child as an individual and setting high standards, the school aims to get the best from every child. Within a stimulating, challenging and exciting environment, it strives to develop each pupil so that they will relish the challenges of life and be ready to flourish at their chosen senior schools. The school also aims to create for each boarder a caring extended family environment where children feel safe and valued in a homely and supportive atmosphere.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.4 The school draws pupils from the surrounding area of Oxford and has many pupils from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The school is an Anglican foundation but welcomes pupils of any faith or none. The school has identified 16 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, eleven of whom receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 18 pupils; two of these pupils receive specialist support and the rest have their needs met by their classroom teacher. Within the curriculum, the school provides a programme of challenging activities in mathematics and English, and in languages from Year 7, for about 40 pupils who are identified as being more able.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in June 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Develop strategies for staff to raise the levels of aspiration, challenge and achievement of the more able pupils.
  - Ensure a greater degree of rigour in management's monitoring of the day-to-day activities of the school.
  - Ensure a strong focus on professional development for all staff, to build confidence and proficiency in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning across the curriculum.
  - In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), provide a range of opportunities for the children to engage further in problem-solving activities.
- 1.7 The recommendations from the intermediate boarding inspection in January 2013 were:

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

1.8 The school has successfully met all the recommendations from their previous inspections.

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

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

- Pupils are inspired to achieve excellence through the uplifting music which permeates and enriches every aspect of life for the whole community.
- The pupils are extremely well educated, in line with the school's aims to ensure that pupils learn to think for themselves and acquire independent learning skills.
- Pupils' achievement is excellent because the majority of the teaching has ambitious expectations and sets challenging tasks. Less successful teaching fails to motivate a minority of pupils.
- Pupils with SEND and with EAL and those who have been identified by the school as being more able achieve their potential because they receive appropriate teaching to suit their needs.

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

- Pupils' personal development is excellent because they show genuine kindness and respect for one another.
- Pupils throughout the school show excellent confidence and self-awareness.
- Pupils develop excellent spirituality through their access to the stimulating musical activities which are a vital part of the school.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well and relationships with staff are of the highest quality.
- Boarding encourages self-discipline and boarders develop independence within the family ethos of their house.

### **Recommendation**

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Ensuring that the highly successful teaching methods seen in the majority of lessons which engage the pupils' interests are employed by all staff.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes towards their learning, each other and their teachers are excellent. Pupils are inspired by the historic environment in which the school is located and the uplifting music which permeates and enriches every aspect of school life. Pupils are mature and independent; they think for themselves and are keen to take initiative when required. They enjoy learning not only from their teachers but also collaboratively from one another. Younger pupils like to talk about their learning and they will ask questions and select tasks to extend it. Older pupils are adept at accessing a wide range of sources, especially through the internet, and can synthesise these to produce sophisticated pieces of independent research.
- 3.3 Pupils of all ages listen attentively in class and can express their ideas clearly and confidently. They read with understanding and their high quality written work shows they are able to write in different ways using the correct type of language and sentence structure. Pupils also achieve high standards in mathematics. In the EYFS, Nursery children can count down from 10 as they prepare to fly off to foreign climes in the 'Continents Club'. Reception children can order numbers up to 20 and recognise three-dimensional shapes. Older pupils confidently apply logical and mathematical understanding to a range of subjects. Pupils throughout the school are developing confidence in their application of technology. A new focus on ICT within the curriculum is broadening its use and enabling the pupils to apply these skills more effectively in other areas. Younger pupils handle basic coding skilfully and older pupils are thoroughly adept at making presentations, producing spreadsheets and displaying data in graphic form. Pupils approach investigative challenges enthusiastically and they are confident about using a wide range of resources. In practical science lessons, younger pupils make intelligent predictions about buoyancy and which materials will best muffle sound. Older pupils interpret graphs successfully, interpreting data on time and distance to understand the speed of a vehicle.
- 3.4 Music is of an exceptional standard throughout the school. The choristers achieve at an outstanding level and other groups within the school such as the school choirs, the brass and wind bands, and the string and guitar groups enjoy and succeed highly in musical activities. In a concert during the inspection, seven and eight year-olds delighted their parents by giving confident individual performances on a range of different instruments. Pupils gain excellent results in music exams, regularly gaining top grades, often with distinction. Over half of the school learn one musical instrument and many learn two.
- 3.5 Sport is accessed by all, with teams performing extremely well in local competitions. This is a testament to the strong coaching given by specialist staff. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few parents expressed concerns about the range of extra-curricular activities offered, and a minority of boarders and their parents reported concerns about the balance of free time and activities. Inspection evidence confirmed that free time is appropriately built into the heavy musical schedule of the boarders and a diverse range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities enable pupils to learn new skills. Pupils achieve individual successes in cricket, football, rugby and swimming at county level. Teams have also been successful in chess, as demonstrated by the fact that the under nine team were county champions in 2015. Individuals play chess at both county and national level. Pupils' artwork is of a high standard, supported by visiting artists and trips to galleries. Drama skills are strong with individual pupils attending London auditions and all pupils regularly performing in high quality productions staged by the school. Pupils develop their performing skills even further through the opportunities offered by the highly popular Arts Day, when winners of the annual poetry competition present their poems to an audience. Pupils also experience jazz sessions, large canvas painting workshops, photography and filming opportunities.
- 3.6 The school does not enter pupils for National Curriculum tests but data provided by the school from standardised tests indicate that attainment for pupils in reading, spelling and maths has been in line with the national average for Year 6 and above the national average for Year 7. Results in Year 8

spelling have been above the national average. However, from the scrutiny of the pupils' work, lesson observations and discussions with pupils throughout the school, attainment is judged to be stronger than the test data provided suggests and high in relation to national age-related expectations. The outcomes for pupils within the EYFS are excellent and senior pupils consistently gain their first choice of senior schools, with many being awarded scholarships.

- 3.7 Pupils' progress in most lessons observed during the inspection throughout the school was rapid as a result of skilful and knowledgeable teaching. Most pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire reported that teaching provides pupils with sufficient opportunities to make good progress. Pupils benefit immensely from careful planning which incorporates work appropriate to pupils' abilities and provides challenge for all, including the more able. The introduction of specialist teaching in some subjects for the younger pupils is also having a noticeable impact on their high achievement. In a very few lessons, pupils lose concentration when activities fail to meet their individual needs.
- 3.8 Data provided by the school show that pupils with SEND make excellent progress in line with their peers. Almost all teaching makes adjustments for their difficulties, and the learning support department prepares appropriate individual learning programmes to ensure that their needs are met. Pupils with EAL perform in line with their peers as their English becomes more assured. In interviews, pupils with EAL were most appreciative of the help and support they receive. More able pupils make excellent progress as a result of the exciting and challenging opportunities they are given to succeed. These include the national maths challenge, debating and chess clubs, and also the optional languages provided such as Italian, German and Greek. Dedicated scholarship classes help the more able senior boys to extend their skills and knowledge further.
- 3.9 The excellent standard of overall achievement is supported most effectively by supportive governance, strong leadership and an efficient newly formed senior management team. Since the previous inspection, more robust systems and structures, staff appraisals and regular lesson observations have been introduced, all of which are contributing significantly to pupils' high standards of achievement. Pupils' academic and pastoral developments are excellent because they are given high priority. Any concerns are monitored most successfully through the recently introduced red and amber list, which details the level of the concern, action taken and outcome. The highly effective leadership and management has ensured that all the recommendations from the previous inspections have been met.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Within a calm, united and purposeful atmosphere, all pupils display eloquence and politeness, and a keen desire to learn. They are acutely aware of the feelings and needs of others and build a reasoned set of attitudes, values and beliefs based on Christian principles. Pupils are proud of their school community and they are keen to contribute to it. Strong relationships with staff ensure they are not afraid to seek advice. Within the school they are given many opportunities to engage in service and leadership and they take their responsibilities seriously. Prefects help to look after the younger boys, listening to them read and assisting them in their form rooms in the morning. Pupils of all ages visit local museums and libraries, and they are regular visitors to the cathedral. Choristers undertake a weekly outreach initiative to visit local primary schools and share their vocal talents. Pupils show a real commitment to raising funds for charity and are currently supporting an orphanage in Zimbabwe.
- 4.3 Pupils show a high standard of spiritual development. Daily assemblies of a predominately Christian nature set the scene for the day ahead with time for quiet and reflective thought. The pupils' spirituality is developed through their access to religious studies and the stimulating musical activities which are a vital part of the school. Children in the EYFS have high regard for, and a heightened awareness of, their natural surroundings. They use their woodland area to investigate signs of spring as they hunt for materials to make a bird's nest. Pupils' strong personal development is successfully supported by the school's values and practices. Its caring ethos is promoted consistently throughout all aspects of school life and it stems from the calm and considered leadership provided.
- 4.4 Pupils throughout the school show excellent confidence and self-awareness. Older pupils in particular show immense perseverance, resilience and a desire to learn new skills. In a history lesson, they demonstrated their considerable self-discipline as they independently accessed relevant sources to support their essay writing. During an assembly, older pupils were reminded of their self-worth and that self-motivation is the path to success. 'Believe it – you can achieve it' was the message to be remembered. Younger pupils show the ability to critique their work, and they are keen to ask their teachers what to do to make further improvements. As they grow older, they become increasingly aware that the decisions they take are important determinants of their own success and well-being. Older pupils reported that they are encouraged to become more independent as they move up the school. They learn valuable business skills when organising their annual enterprise day. In their school houses, pupils grasp financial awareness as they use a small start-up loan to initiate, organise and oversee the sale of various products for charity. Each house is keen to claim victory by raising the most money.
- 4.5 Pupils understand the need for rules in any society and respect the way in which laws are made and applied in England. The excellent behaviour, which originates in the EYFS setting as the 'golden rules', is prevalent throughout the school. Recently, older pupils, together with staff, have compiled a new set of rules which they consider to be useful and fair. In the questionnaire, a few parents and pupils reported that the school does not always deal effectively with bullying. Inspectors scrutinised procedures and records and found that any such incidents are handled firmly and documented thoroughly. Pupils develop a very good understanding of the workings of democracy and of the concept of economic well-being. Opportunities for democratic voting, such as for the election of school council representatives, further this understanding. Pupils acquire a strong understanding of rules and laws through debating club, where lively discussions about Britain's exit from the European Union and the deployment of police officers have ensued.
- 4.6 Children in the EYFS know how to work together and solve problems. They choose seeds for their vegetable garden and collaborate closely as they plant and tend to them. Once these plants are harvested, the children show huge delight in feeding their carrots to Alice and Percy, the EYFS

rabbits. Six year-olds work together most enthusiastically, using clues to discover the identity of a classroom visitor, while older pupils form groups quickly and easily to practise coaching points in football. Pupils throughout the school appreciate each other's sensitivities and differences, are tolerant of one another, respect differences and show understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. In the pupils' questionnaire, a very large majority of the respondents reported that the school encourages them to respect others.

- 4.7 Boarders, who are all choristers, are particularly self-disciplined. They spoke most enthusiastically to inspectors of the benefits that boarding gives them and of the family feel within the boarding community, in line with the school's aims. They confirmed that they have many opportunities to put forward suggestions through their boarding council. Their views and ideas are valued and have led to many requests being granted, including the purchase of bean bags for their common room. In the questionnaires, 11 of the 17 boarders who responded raised concerns about the quality and quantity of the food provided. Having scrutinised menus and observed and sampled their meals, inspection evidence confirmed that the food is suitable. Boarders may choose a vegetarian option, salad and fruit at every meal and they can enjoy frequent and plentiful snacks during the day. Boarders' experiences are greatly enhanced by the care shown by the boarding staff and the efficiency with which the house is run.
- 4.8 Throughout the school, day pupils and boarders alike appreciate the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. Pupils thoroughly enjoy sport and take part in a range of exciting activities. Pupils in interview confirmed that they understand how to stay safe online and they showed an awareness of the dangers of social media. Children within the EYFS are independent in their self-care routines and they know why they should wash their hands before they eat. Pupils reported in interviews that they make healthy choices at lunchtimes and they could describe the benefits of exercise. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles in personal, social and health education and in science, and they have many opportunities to be active in physical education and games. Outdoor pursuits and sport are actively encouraged by the school to keep children physically fit.
- 4.9 Pupils show kindness and considerable respect for one another, whatever their cultural backgrounds, religious faiths or traditions. The house system and the diversity within the school community underpin the consideration which all pupils show. Older pupils enjoy comparing different religions and show admiration for the work of Nelson Mandela, for example, while younger pupils celebrate Diwali and saints' days. During the inspection, they thoroughly enjoyed their Chinese New Year activities, which included cooking dumplings and designing dragons. In the questionnaires all parents who responded agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 4.10 By the time they leave school, pupils have an excellent standard of personal development. The school is very accomplished in meeting its aim to ensure that they will relish the challenges of life and be ready to flourish at their chosen senior schools.