



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
WELLS CATHEDRAL SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Wells Cathedral School

Full Name of School	<b>Wells Cathedral School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>933/6029</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>310212</b>		
Address	<b>Wells Cathedral School The Liberty Wells Somerset BA5 2ST</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01749 834200</b>		
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Email Address	<b>c.edwards@wells-cathedral-school.com</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Elizabeth Cairncross</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>The Very Revd John Clarke</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>696</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (352 boys; 344 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>140</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>41</b>	11-18: <b>515</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>452</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>244</b>	
	Full:	<b>222</b>	Flexi: <b>22</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Janet Bennett</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection Dates	<b>11 Nov 2014 to 14 Nov 2014</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2011.

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, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

This inspection contains specific judgements on 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 and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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 judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the**

**same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed 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 boarding houses and 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 Pamela Leech	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sheila Hayward	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Neil Boulton	Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Magnus Cowie	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Paula Cross	Team Inspector (Assistant Principal, HMC school)
Mr James Fowler	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Miss Karen Hollingdale	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mrs Sue Lucas	Team Inspector (Teacher, ISA and Society of Heads school)
Mr Alex Osiatynski	Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Patrick Wenham	Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Eileen Grimes	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Timothy Bayley	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Kirsten Jackson	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Founded in 909 to educate choristers, Wells Cathedral School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils from the ages of 3 to 18. For over 1000 years, the school has had a symbiotic relationship with Wells Cathedral, in its governance, in the use of the cathedral, through the site and through the choristers, all of whom are educated at the school; the girls' choir was founded in 1994. In 1980 the school was recognised as one of five UK specialist music schools where exceptionally talented young musicians receive funding from the Department for Education. The school is run as a charitable trust and a company limited by guarantee; the governing body has proprietorial responsibility and comprises ten ecclesiastical and lay members. Situated in 54 acres in the centre of the small cathedral city of Wells in Somerset, the school accommodates its pupils in a combination of historic and purpose-built premises some of which belong to the cathedral. Senior and junior schools share the same site together with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a community where pupils are encouraged to discover themselves and then to be themselves to the very best of their abilities. It seeks to promote an atmosphere where work, study and spirituality are harmoniously combined in a creative mix within a family environment. Based on Christian values, the school welcomes pupils of all faiths or of none, striving to inspire them to meet the challenges of the future with courage, enthusiasm, resilience, optimism and philanthropy.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has followed a planned programme of improvements and development, including the upgrading of four existing houses and the purchase and refurbishment of a new boarding house, Canon Grange. The junior school administrative and leadership teams have relocated, and the Cook Building teaching block is now fully operational. Many teaching and administrative areas have undergone redecoration and refurbishment and the school has begun the construction of a sports pavilion and a new maintenance building.
- 1.4 There are currently 696 pupils on roll, 352 boys and 344 girls. Of these, 41 children are in the EYFS; 140 pupils are in the junior school and 515 in the senior school. Two hundred and forty-four pupils board at the school. Pupils come from within a twenty-mile radius of the school across Somerset, as well as from a wide range of over twenty countries around the world. They are from a variety of social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Parents are predominantly professional or self-employed.
- 1.5 The ability profile of both the junior and senior schools, as indicated by standardised testing, is above the national average with a wide spread of abilities represented. There are 51 pupils who have been identified by the school as having special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom are provided with learning support, and 51 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) who also receive appropriate support. No pupils currently have a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 Wells Cathedral School is successful in meeting its aim to encourage all pupils to strive for excellence with passion and integrity in a community which is welcoming and nurturing. Children in the EYFS flourish in the caring atmosphere and make an excellent start to their education. Throughout the school, pupils develop an enthusiasm towards their learning, apply their knowledge confidently and articulately and achieve well academically. They work well co-operatively and independently, and are supported by good teaching. The well-balanced curriculum, complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, enhances learning opportunities. Assessment procedures help teachers to understand the needs of their pupils and are most effectively used in the junior school to enable thorough planning. Whilst feedback through marking has improved since the previous inspection, agreed procedures are still inconsistently applied in the senior school. Some progress has been made to improve the learning environment for science and music classes in the junior school as recommended at the time of the previous inspection. Those with SEND and EAL are extremely well supported, and some challenging extension activities, particularly in the senior school, help the more able pupils extend their understanding and knowledge. Pupils enjoy their lessons and take pride in their work.
- 2.2 The school achieves an outstanding measure of success in its aim to provide a specialist music school enfolded within its day-to-day academic function. Highly competent specialist teachers inspire and encourage their pupils through individual and class music sessions and pupils make excellent progress. Extremely high standards of performance are acknowledged by staff while encouraging pupils to seek greater fulfilment of their talents. Musically talented pupils thrive in this warm, understanding atmosphere. Achievement in music and extra-curricular activities is excellent.
- 2.3 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent and the good quality of their boarding experience makes a strong contribution for the boarders. Pupils' behaviour is of a high standard and they act with respect and tolerance towards each other. An important feature is the genuine appreciation they show of each other's talents and achievements. Pupils embrace opportunities to take responsibility and are eager to contribute to their community. They are proud of their school and the long traditional links with the cathedral. They appreciate the excellent pastoral support freely given by staff and feel confident that staff will always help and guide them. Good measures are in place to ensure their welfare, health and safety. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils said that they had few opportunities to take responsibility, or to put forward their opinions. The inspection team agree with these views for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- 2.4 Governance is good. Governors are dedicated in their support of the school and maintain an effective oversight of the school. However, their monitoring of regulatory requirements, including procedures for the recruitment of some staff, the testing of a very small amount of electrical equipment and, improving the quality of accommodation in one of the boarding houses as recommended at the time of the previous inspection has not been sufficiently rigorous. Leadership and management are good. A welfare team of tutors, academic and pastoral staff has been established with clear lines of responsibilities thereby meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection, and the junior leadership team now benefits from a



greater time allowance to enable effective evaluation of the provision. Management structures have undergone a recent strategic change with managers committed to promoting the vision of the school, but their impact has not yet been evaluated. Staff in the EYFS do not yet have the relevant qualifications to enable them to extend the use of the external natural environment across the curriculum so the school currently uses another provider. Links with parents are excellent.

## **2.(b) Action points**

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

- 2.5 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:
- ensure that all required recruitment checks, particularly barred list, and medical checks, are completed before a member of staff begins work [Part 4, paragraph 19.(2)(a) and 19.(3), and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety];
  - implement PAT testing on all electrical equipment within the boarding houses [Part 3, paragraph 11 under Welfare, health and safety, and, for the same reason, National Minimum Standard 6.2];
  - ensure that boarders' accommodation is maintained to a standard that is consistent across houses and is appropriate in providing a homely atmosphere [Part 5, paragraph 23H, under Premises and accommodation, and, for the same reason, National Minimum Standards 5.2 and 5.4, under Boarding accommodation].
- 2.6 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013, as described above.

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

- 2.7 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that feedback through marking procedures and practices is of a consistently high standard across the school.
  2. Improve the experience of pupils in Years 7 to 9 by giving more opportunities for them to express their opinions formally and undertake positions of responsibility.
  3. Evaluate the impact of management structures across the school, including the new senior structure, to ensure that they meet the needs of the whole school.
  4. Strengthen the monitoring of all aspects of boarding to enhance opportunities for sharing of current best practice and self-evaluation.
  5. Provide training for staff in the EYFS which will enable them to extend the use of the external natural environment across the curriculum.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEARNING**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, pupils reach high standards and demonstrate an eagerness to learn and to be the best that they can be, in accordance with the school's aim. Children in the Nursery count groups of objects, use blocks to add and subtract and are beginning to form their letters. In Reception, children confidently count to, and manipulate numbers within, twenty, and spell and write simple words. Pupils in the rest of the school are enthusiastic listeners, expressing their opinions freely and articulately. They write fluently and demonstrate a good understanding of grammar, spelling and punctuation. They attain high standards in reading and achieve well in mathematics. They apply logical and mathematical understanding to scientific subjects and are competent users of information and communication technology (ICT).
- 3.3 Pupils confidently employ a range of study and research skills, think critically and work independently. For example, younger children demonstrated creativity with mud while older pupils used sand and weights to illustrate liquefaction. The most senior pupils competently applied logical research criteria to individual extension projects.
- 3.4 The academic progress of pupils is significantly strengthened by their excellent achievements in extra-curricular activities. The school achieves exceptional success in music at all levels. Results in examinations with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music are outstanding, with a number of pupils achieving the highest marks in the UK. A large majority of entrants gained merit or distinction, many of those at grade eight. Choristers perform at many prestigious events and participate in broadcasts for the BBC. In performances both nationally and abroad, pupils achieve outstanding instrumental, choral and compositional successes.
- 3.5 Artwork exhibited around the school demonstrates the creativity of pupils and junior school pupils have exhibited in the National Gallery. All pupils approach co-operative learning with purpose and maturity, as seen in the high standard of rehearsals for forthcoming concerts. Other pupils worked together to design eco-classrooms for the future, successfully winning a regional competition. Older pupils are highly successful across a range of national academic competitions winning the Geological Society Challenge, science and mathematical Olympiad medals and a Commonwealth essay writing competition. Pupils of all ages participate in sports and other physical activities with enthusiasm, achieving notable successes at regional and national levels. They engage in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme with a high number achieving the gold level.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at age 11 have been good in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools with English results being excellent. Results in mathematics have improved from 2011. Progress overall is high in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. Most pupils continue their education in the senior school.

- 3.7 Performance in GCSE has been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Results in IGCSE in English and mathematics have been higher while science has achieved a broadly comparable A – B percentage when compared to worldwide norms. These levels of attainment indicate that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability, as shown by standardised measures of progress. Most pupils remain in the school for Years 12 and 13.
- 3.8 A level results have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. The school does not use standardised ability and progress testing in Years 12 and 13. Through lesson observations, curriculum interviews with pupils and the examination of their work, inspectors judged that pupils make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. Pupils consistently gain places to universities, conservatoires and academies in the UK and across the world which have high entry requirements.
- 3.9 Individually-tailored programmes of study enable pupils with SEND to make excellent progress. Pupils with EAL progress rapidly, supported well by subject teachers and small group specialist language teaching. More able pupils extend their understanding and learning through a range of opportunities within and beyond the curriculum, engaging in activities such as the mathematics specialist workshops or participating in dramatic productions.
- 3.10 Pupils throughout the school have highly positive attitudes towards their learning. They enjoy working independently as well as together, and take pride in the presentation of their work. Their behaviour, care and support for one another in their learning are excellent. Children in the EYFS are active learners; they explore, investigate, concentrate and work independently with enthusiasm.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.11 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.12 The curriculum provides effective coverage of every requisite area of learning and is well supported by the range of extra-curricular activities. The school is successful in meeting its aim to provide an education which has, at its core, consideration of the individual needs of each pupil. The curriculum is well-planned and makes a strong contribution to the excellent achievement of pupils. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents indicated their satisfaction with the range of subjects and educational experiences offered to their children.
- 3.13 The curriculum for the EYFS is broad, diverse and supported well by a wide range of enrichment activities, which enable the children's needs to be met. Specialist music, drama, dance and games sessions enhance the sensory development of the children, while adventurous learning in the natural environment heightens their perception of the world around them. Effective free-flow sessions allow children to move between the classroom and the outside areas, developing their learning in a variety of environments. In the rest of the school, the range of subjects offered is good. In the junior school, pupils are encouraged to be active with a range of physical education (PE) lessons, including survival swimming, team games and dance. Science and music are embedded within the curriculum; however,

classroom space is limited. In both junior and senior schools, facilities for design and technology are adequate. Appropriate personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programmes and life skills courses are effectively provided across the school and pupils feel well supported when making GCSE and A-level choices as well as when considering further education options.

- 3.14 Individual arrangements are provided for specialist musicians and choristers at every stage in the curriculum. Particular care is taken to ensure that pupils with specialist music timetables access an appropriate curriculum pathway that affords them a choice of music or academia when they leave. The integrated arts programme in Years 7 to 9 effectively links curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for all pupils through its exploration of a variety of topics. A two-week timetable incorporating longer lessons has been successfully introduced since the previous inspection.
- 3.15 The inherent flexibility built into the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils in the senior school allows for an individual approach for specialist musicians and those pupils with SEND or EAL. This contributes significantly to the good progress made by these pupils. Planning and provision for pupils in the junior school with SEND is excellent. Detailed personal learning plans include the strategies used to meet pupils' needs so that they make good progress. There is effective provision in most subjects for the more able pupils. The extended project qualification is offered in Years 12 and 13. The library is well used as a resource centre for learning, and ICT is embedded within the curriculum in both junior and senior schools.
- 3.16 A wide array of extra-curricular activities provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop individual enthusiasms and include cheer-leading, drama, dance and sports in the junior school; debating, computing, bridge and sailing in the senior. Care is taken to ensure a suitable balance of extra-curricular activities for specialist music pupils. The Combined Cadet Force and Duke of Edinburgh's Award are well supported by pupils and a wealth of ensemble opportunities are available to specialist and non-specialist musicians in both junior and senior schools.
- 3.17 Educational visits in the junior school include visits to art galleries, an exchange partnership with a school in Germany and participation in international festivals. In the senior school, pupils visit galleries and theatres and undertake a varied range of field trips including international musical tours.
- 3.18 Pupils are encouraged to become involved in the local community and links are strong. Children in the EYFS visit the library, market and the cathedral. Older pupils demonstrate their commitment through volunteer work as gardeners, helping in the local junior school, serving in a charity shop and designing cards for a restoration project at the cathedral. Musicians of all ages engage in many public performances.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.19 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.20 Teaching is effective in supporting the aims of the school to encourage each pupil to develop a love of learning. Most pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, indicated that they found the work interesting and believed they were making good progress. Parents were equally satisfied and inspection evidence supports this view.
- 3.21 Throughout the school, lessons are well planned and resourced. Teachers understand the needs of their pupils, providing work which helps them to make good

progress. Teaching in the EYFS is dynamic and supported effectively by a thorough system of assessment and planning. Teachers understand the way children learn and develop; they have high expectations, adapting their planning to incorporate children's abilities and interests, and fully meeting the needs of each child. In the junior and senior schools, well-planned lessons engage pupils and enable their good progress.

- 3.22 Teachers have good subject knowledge and frequently use this to inspire pupils. Across the school, the strength of personal relationships between pupils and staff fosters a positive learning environment and teachers give generously of their time both inside and outside the classroom in order to help pupils to learn. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of exercises and resources to engage pupils and encourage them to participate in their learning. Pupils make less progress when lessons are slower in pace or offer fewer opportunities for individual contributions. Pupils use ICT appropriately.
- 3.23 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils indicated that they were not given the right amount of work to do. Pupils interviewed during the inspection felt that the demands placed on them were appropriate and that the school was sensitive to their personal situation and helped them to manage their workload. Junior school choristers and music specialists were highly appreciative of this consideration.
- 3.24 The school has a sound marking policy and teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Some progress in meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection has been made; in the junior school, feedback through marking is of a high standard, but this is less consistent in the senior school. Pupils of all ages value the verbal feedback regularly given in lessons and say that this helps them to make good progress. A small minority of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, felt that homework did not help them learn, but after examination of work books and through discussions with pupils, inspectors found homework to be appropriate and helpful. Assessment data is used effectively in the junior school to monitor pupil progress and inform the next steps in learning but data is less consistently used in this way in the senior school.
- 3.25 More able pupils make rapid progress when offered opportunities to extend and challenge their learning; however, these opportunities are less developed in the junior school. Strong support is provided for pupils with SEND and for those with EAL and there are highly effective links between specialist support staff and classroom teachers, enabling these pupils to make excellent progress.

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

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' personal development successfully fulfils the aims of the school which encourage pupils to discover themselves in an atmosphere where work, study and spirituality are harmoniously combined. The spiritual awareness of pupils is excellent. The pupils have a strong appreciation for the non-material aspects of life and they develop a strong sense of spiritual identity enhanced by the close links with Wells Cathedral. Senior school pupils reflect thoughtfully on the meaning of identity in the regular assemblies and services which take place in the cathedral, and junior school pupils contemplate their lives through prayers and readings presented in assemblies. Pupils' spiritual development is further enhanced by their appreciation of the frequent and exceptionally striking musical performances which add to the profundity of their experience.
- 4.3 Pupils explore their religious lives very effectively through confirmation classes or prayer groups and value the support and guidance of the chaplaincy on a daily basis and at moments of special significance. They recognise and celebrate other faiths and beliefs, joining in a special service for the international community in the cathedral. Pupils without a specific faith reach towards an understanding of a spiritual dimension in their lives through the richness of the art and music which surrounds them.
- 4.4 Pupils of all ages demonstrate strong moral awareness. They are courteous and well behaved, displaying confidence without arrogance and taking pride in their school. In the EYFS, the children are given the confidence to act responsibly towards each other because the staff are positive role models. Children learn to cooperate through sharing toys and are encouraged to be polite and thoughtful. Throughout the junior and senior schools, pupils' deep awareness of right and wrong was demonstrated in lively discussions on moral issues. Pupils' conduct is exemplary and their moral development is supported by a strong PSHCE programme and life skills courses.
- 4.5 The social development of pupils is excellent. Children in the EYFS are eager to help each other as was seen in their participation in model making. Older pupils support each other well. They respect the success of others without envy and value the opportunities provided by the school which allow them to flourish. Many pupils help others very effectively while developing their own understanding of social responsibility through community service in the local area. Pupils' have a strong awareness of those less fortunate than themselves, reflected in the significant amount of charity work and fund-raising they undertake, and in their desire to help those far beyond their own environment in places such as Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Children in the EYFS enjoy being given responsibility and enthusiastically participate in clearing-up sessions. In the rest of the school, a small minority of pupils in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicated that they did not have the chance to take on responsibilities. While pupils in the junior school and older pupils in the senior school are able to develop their leadership skills in a variety of ways, those in Years 7 to 9 have fewer opportunities.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural awareness is excellent. They develop a strong cultural appreciation of the world around them through participating in the school's rich cultural

programme of music, theatre, art and design, literacy and political debate. Children in the EYFS explored the idea of what sort of creatures might inhabit space and made their own paper fireworks to celebrate bonfire night. Junior school pupils effectively learn about working together through collaborating in communal art projects with local schools. Exchanges with schools in Germany and Hong Kong give older pupils a better understanding of international relationships.

- 4.7 Similar positive attitudes are seen in the relationships between international pupils in the senior school where all pupils support those from different cultures generously and appreciatively. They develop an extremely good appreciation of British and international values in the opportunity for all to participate in Remembrance services and in a Chinese New Year celebration. Pupils work together well to achieve excellence in cultural projects as exemplified by the striking artwork which greets visitors to the school.
- 4.8 Pupils achieve high standards of personal development by the time they leave school. Children in the EYFS show kindness for each other and happily progress into the next stage. Older pupils are confident and demonstrate great pride in their school. They are tolerant and respectful of each other and ready to take their place as good citizens in society.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.9 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 A highly effective pastoral system supports the school's aims to create a community where each pupil feels valued and celebrated as an individual and makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Excellent staff relationships and teamwork in the EYFS, enable children to feel safe and enjoy their early experience of school life. Their key people ensure that learning is carefully monitored so that children develop in confidence. They help them manage their own personal needs and become independent. In fulfilling a recommendation at the time of the previous inspection, a pupil welfare team has been established across the school. This team consists of pastoral and academic staff and provides an excellent, cohesive response to the needs of individuals across all age groups. The well-established house and tutor systems are pivotal in the pastoral care of junior and senior pupils and the vast majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed themselves as highly satisfied with the care their children receive.
- 4.11 Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are warm and sincere. Older pupils willingly help younger ones and this reflects the spirit of camaraderie which is an important part of the ethos of the school. Pupils feel well supported and are confident that any concerns they may have will be quickly and sensitively addressed. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the questionnaire stated that their children feel safe and happy at school. A very small minority of parents and pupils responding to the questionnaire felt that the school does not handle cases of bullying well. Inspectors found, through examinations of school records and in speaking with pupils and parents, that the school has effective measures to guard against bullying and that appropriate procedures are followed meticulously and thoughtfully. In discussions, pupils were clear that bullying is not acceptable behaviour and any instances are dealt with thoughtfully and sensitively.
- 4.12 In their questionnaire responses, a small minority of pupils were unhappy with the way rewards and sanctions are applied. After discussions with pupils and close

examination of records, inspectors concluded that rewards and sanctions are appropriately and consistently awarded. The school has excellent provision to promote good behaviour and most parents in their questionnaire responses indicated their satisfaction with the high standards of behaviour across the school.

- 4.13 A minority of pupils indicated in their responses to the questionnaire that the school does not ask for or respond to their opinions. Discussions with pupils and examination of procedures showed that there are mechanisms in place to seek pupils' views and that the school acts on them when appropriate. These mechanisms are less well developed in Years 7 to 9, where pupils have fewer opportunities to discuss their opinions.
- 4.14 Healthy living is effectively promoted throughout the school. Children in the EYFS enjoy nutritious and healthy meals and snacks and happily explain that eating fruit and salad vegetables is good for you. Morning and afternoon warm-ups in the Nursery and 'Fitness Friday' help the children understand the need for physical exercise. Older pupils enjoy a well-balanced and varied menu and exercise regularly through timetabled lessons and the activities programme.
- 4.15 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

#### **4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.17 The school makes good arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of all its pupils including children in the EYFS. Excellent systems for training staff in child protection matters are undertaken by the designated safeguarding lead, supported by the local safeguarding children board with whom close links have been made. Detailed records have been kept of any concerns or referrals to the local authority designated officer. Staff are clear about what they should do in the event of a disclosure being made. Safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriately implemented on a day-to-day basis; however, recent recruitment checks have not always been carried out sufficiently rigorously.
- 4.18 Effective measures to minimise the risk to pupils of fire are carefully implemented. Regular risk assessments, weekly testing of fire alarms and fire drills are undertaken and procedures are appropriately recorded. Almost all electrical equipment, barring a very small number of appliances in the boarding houses, has received appropriate testing with results correctly recorded. Comprehensive risk assessments for buildings and grounds are updated on a regular basis. There are suitable changing rooms designated for boys and girls, and conveniently sited washrooms. Suitable disabled facilities are provided. Drinking water is always available.
- 4.19 Appropriate policies are implemented to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils in school and on educational trips and visits. A suitable number of staff have received training in first aid and those with responsibility for younger children have received paediatric first aid training. Pupils who are unwell are properly cared for in appropriate facilities until they are collected by parents. Admission and attendance records are suitably maintained and stored, and rigorous systems are implemented to register attendance and check absentees.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.20 The overall quality of boarding education is good.



- 4.21 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders are proud of their boarding houses and their school. They thrive in the nurturing atmosphere and are confident and self-assured. Those who are choristers fulfil their duties with integrity and a keen sense of perpetuating a role stretching back over centuries. Musicians flourish in the strong musical tradition enhanced by the links with the cathedral. Boarders feel individually valued and supported, enjoying positive relationships with the staff who look after them and with each other. They develop into polite, articulate young people, eager to accept leadership roles and demonstrating kindness and tolerance in their friendships with each other. Overseas boarders feel welcomed and value the steps taken to integrate them into the community. Boarders are able to influence their boarding experience through the prefects, house meetings or by informal contact with boarding staff. Prefects and house captains receive training to enable them to fulfil their roles with confidence. Many contribute to the smooth running of their houses by establishing rotas for tidying up or keeping kitchen areas clean and tidy. Behaviour in the houses is of a very high quality and helps to promote the pervading atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.
- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Boarding houses occupy historic buildings which pose a range of challenges in their maintenance and renovation. A few parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the accommodation was not comfortable. Since the previous inspection, much updating has been successfully undertaken across the boarding houses, although Shrewsbury house has not yet been adequately improved. All houses have well-stocked kitchens and laundry provision is excellent. Recreation rooms provide opportunities for boarders to relax or play games. Boarders are encouraged to be fit and healthy and are able to use the excellent sports facilities of the school. Bedrooms have individual desks where pupils may study and the school library is open all evening. Many boarders personalise their areas. Although a small minority of boarders in their questionnaire responses said that their belongings were not safe, all boarders have lockable facilities and staff are always happy to look after valuables. Small purchases may be made in the local shops. Houses have plenty of bathrooms, showers and toilets, and hot water supplies are generous.
- 4.23 A small minority of pupils responding to the questionnaire were unhappy with the quality of food provided. Inspectors found that menus are well-planned and use locally-sourced ingredients. Meals are well-cooked, plentiful and offer an excellent choice and variety. All dietary needs are fully catered for. A small minority of boarders in the questionnaire responses were unhappy with the availability of drinking water and snacks; however, inspectors noted that drinking water is plentiful across the campus and snacks are always readily available in houses.
- 4.24 In their responses to the questionnaire, a small minority of boarders were unhappy with the balance of free time and activities in the evenings and at weekends. However, residential staff are vigilant in ensuring that boarders with onerous duties have sufficient time for relaxation. In discussions with inspectors, boarders were appreciative of this care and of the wide range of activities available to them. Boarders use email, other electronic systems and mobile phones to keep in touch with parents.
- 4.25 A thorough induction programme enables new boarders to settle quickly into the routines of their houses with more established boarders acting as mentors. House notice boards present a useful array of information including contact details for outside agencies, and boarders are confident in the adults to whom they can turn for advice and guidance should they have a concern. The welfare team offers an extra

level of support where needed and the independent listener provides a further opportunity for boarders to speak to an adult in addition to house and academic staff. House staff attend concerts in school and in the cathedral to encourage and support boarders.

- 4.26 The health centre is centrally located and is pleasant and welcoming with good arrangements for looking after sick pupils. Qualified nursing staff are on site during the school day and are easily contactable when off site. Medication is correctly dispensed and recorded with parental consent obtained. Homely remedies and other medication may be dispensed in houses with efficient electronic systems to ensure records are always up-to-date. Arrangements for self-medication are robust. Confidentiality and the rights of boarders are scrupulously protected.
- 4.27 The arrangements for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders are good. Boarders feel safe and are appreciative of the care of staff. The school implements excellent procedures to ensure the safety of choristers when moving between the school and the cathedral. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective, with boarding staff recruited correctly, and well supported by a comprehensive policy. The anti-bullying and behaviour policies are effective and the houses operate suitable systems to monitor and encourage good behaviour. Excellent systems for boarders to sign in and out enable staff to know pupils' whereabouts. The missing child policy is clear and understood by all staff. Resident staff may be easily contacted at any time during the night should boarders require assistance. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out and regular fire drills take place in boarding time with all relevant records correctly maintained and stored. Portable appliance testing of electrical items has not been fully implemented and a very few minor deficiencies were brought to the school's attention.
- 4.28 The leadership and management of boarding are good. The statement of boarding principles is seen to work well in practice. Recent changes in senior management positions have encouraged a greater emphasis on sharing best practice within boarding but opportunities are not yet fully embedded. A qualifications audit system has also been implemented to identify training needs for all house staff to support their professional development. The strong tutorial system enhances the provision for boarders with highly effective communication between academic, music and residential staff enabling boarders to fulfil their potential at all levels. Clear priorities for development have been identified and a refurbishment programme is beginning to address the recommendations from the previous Ofsted inspection. Policies and procedures are regularly updated. A clear complaints policy is available to parents and boarders. Parents expressed themselves as highly satisfied with the care their children receive and boarders are equally appreciative.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing body is highly supportive of the school's aim to provide an enriching educational experience for all pupils, while encompassing a specialist school for those who are musically gifted. Governors have a clear vision for the future supported by carefully considered strategic, educational and financial planning. The school's historical and musical links with Wells Cathedral are strengthened by the composition of the board, and governors offer a wide range of professional experience and expertise. They undertake suitable induction and training courses.
- 5.3 Governors maintain a clear oversight of the school, including the EYFS, through active financial and education committees and by investing in high quality staffing, resources and facilities. They regularly visit, support school events and hold frequent discussions with staff and pupils. They are also accessible to parents. Governors work closely with senior managers and provide support, challenge and stimulus for improvement. However, the board has not been sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that all electrical testing has been carried out.
- 5.4 Whilst governors are conscientious in discharging their responsibilities for child protection by undertaking the annual review of the safeguarding policy and practice, they have not monitored recruitment procedures sufficiently well.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.6 The leadership and management of the school are effective in enabling the school to meet its aims to provide an education where pupils are encouraged to be the best that they can be in every sphere of their lives. As a result, all pupils, including children in the EYFS, feel individually valued and become confident achievers. They develop excellent personal qualities and many make an outstanding musical contribution. They flourish in the nurturing atmosphere and feel safe and happy at school. Management strategies which focus on meeting individual educational needs have resulted in excellent provision for pupils with SEND and EAL, and good provision for the more able, promoting their learning. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and properly implemented with close reference to the governing body. Self-evaluation and development planning are suitably linked.
- 5.7 Recent changes in senior managers have encouraged a strategic change in the management structure, the impact of which has yet to be evaluated and proven. In the EYFS, staff have a clear vision for the setting and have identified areas for development through effective self-evaluation. Excellent systems for supervision, appraisal and performance management have been refined since the previous inspection, and staff are encouraged to develop their skills, knowledge and practice through professional courses. At present there is no-one qualified in the EYFS to

extend the use of the external natural environment to cover all areas of the curriculum and other providers are currently used.

- 5.8 In the rest of the school, heads of department consistently monitor standards of teaching and learning across all subject areas and planning is thorough. Detailed schemes of work promote a variety of learning opportunities for pupils and there are procedures for monitoring and evaluating pupils' ability and progress, although the use of assessment in the senior school is not always consistently applied. Teaching staff benefit from regular appraisal and continuing opportunities for professional development. Induction training and guidance for new staff is effectively implemented.
- 5.9 Appropriate systems to ensure the recruitment of suitable staff are not always meticulously applied in carrying out barred list checks, references and medical fitness checks before staff begin work at school; however, all checks are now complete. Staff receive regular training in their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Staff in the EYFS, who have all been recruited correctly, have a high awareness of safeguarding. Policies are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet requirements and are properly implemented.
- 5.10 Links with parents are excellent. In the EYFS, partnerships with parents are strong with opportunities for parents to contribute to their child's profile and influence their next steps in learning. Links with external agencies are good, helping to support children in their learning. Throughout the school, parents are satisfied with the education and support provided for their children. They are particularly positive about the progress of their children, the appropriate range of subjects and experiences and the good range of extra-curricular activities. They are confident that their children are safe, happy, well looked after and will be treated as individuals.
- 5.11 Relationships between parents and the school are excellent, with some second and third generation Wellensian families in the school. In their responses to the questionnaire, a very small minority of parents felt that their concerns had not been well handled. On investigation and by looking at the detailed records which the school keeps of any complaints raised, inspectors found that the school has rigorous procedures to handle any complaints and, whilst the occasions on which a formal concern has been raised are rare, these procedures have been meticulously followed at all times.
- 5.12 A very small minority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they were unhappy with the information they receive about their children's progress; however, inspectors found that the on-line parental portal offers detailed information on each child's progress and is easily accessible. Reports are sent to parents twice yearly. These are informative and evaluative with a clear focus on guiding pupils in the next steps of their learning. Every six weeks there are grade sheets for pupils in the senior school containing achievement and effort grades. Teachers may be contacted by email and the school operates an open-door policy to encourage easy communication between parents and the school.
- 5.13 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children through the twice-yearly consultation evening, parent workshops, options mornings and at concerts and games fixtures. The school's website gives curriculum information for junior school parents, with weekly homework and spellings for their children. The calendar gives helpful information about forthcoming events

and parents have email addresses and telephone numbers of house staff who care for those in Year 10 and above. Parents of choristers have daily opportunity to discuss any concerns. In addition to the school's website, parents receive a weekly letter from the head and the bi-annual *In Touch* magazine. Parents of younger pupils communicate through the homework diary.

- 5.14 Clear published information is sent to all parents of current and prospective pupils with additional invitations to concerts in the cathedral and other events. The active parents' association contacts all new parents and invites them to social events organised by the class representatives to help them feel at home.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**