



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**RIPON CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

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## Ripon Cathedral Choir School

Full Name of School	<b>Ripon Cathedral Choir School</b>
DfE Number	<b>815/6016</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>529583</b>
Address	<b>Ripon Cathedral Choir School Whitcliffe Lane Ripon North Yorkshire HG4 2LA</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01765 602134</b>
Fax Number	<b>01765 608760</b>
Email Address	<b>admin@cathedralchoirschool.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Chris McDade</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Professor John Brindley</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>73</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (48 boys; 25 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>0</b> 5-11: <b>43</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>18</b> 11-13: <b>12</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>60</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>13</b> Full: <b>4</b> Weekly: <b>9</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Jane Willis</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>22 May 2012 to 25 May 2012</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 March 2009.

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. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and/or disabilities).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning corporal punishment.

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

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 Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. 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. 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 March 2009 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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.

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', 'satisfactory' 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 and other members of the governing body, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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 Danice Iles

Mr Jonathan Milton

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Mrs Bridget Forrest

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Ripon Cathedral Choir School is a day and boarding preparatory school for boys and girls between the ages of three and thirteen. It was founded in 1960 by the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral as a residential choir school for boys. It became co-educational in 1979, and the pre-preparatory department, for pupils under seven years of age, opened in 1988. The boy choristers are mostly boarders, and some girl choristers also board; there is a special timetable and programme for boarding choristers. Weekly and flexible boarding is available to other pupils over eight years old. The school is set in its own grounds on the outskirts of Ripon, a short drive from the Cathedral. The classrooms, music rooms, sports hall, and playing areas are adjacent to the main building which houses the boarding accommodation, dining room, and offices. The school is registered as a charitable trust. The governing body is made up of lay and Chapter nominated members, with the latter always being in the majority.
- 1.2 The school aims to encourage excellence, particularly in music, and to achieve the best possible academic results for each pupil in a happy, secure environment where a Christian family ethos encourages respect and care for each other. It also seeks to encourage confidence and independence, and identify and nurture each child's talents and skills.
- 1.3 The school has 73 pupils, 48 boys and 25 girls; 22 are choristers, 15 boys and 7 girls. There are 13 chorister boarders, 4 full-time and 9 weekly of whom 3 are girls, plus a few occasional boarders during the week. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has 18 children, 13 of whom are part-time. The Cathedral awards choral scholarships to the choristers, and the school offers a Year 7 bursary for exceptional talent in music, sport or academic work. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, or has English as an additional language. The school provides specialist learning support for four pupils whom they have identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Apart from the choristers for whom there is a selection procedure, the school does not set formal academic tests on entry, although there are assessments to ensure that the education offered is appropriate to the child. The ability profile of the pupils is above the national average and covers a wide range.
- 1.4 Most pupils come from families with business or professional backgrounds, predominantly British, who live within ten miles of the city. A few international pupils attend the school. Several Year 6 pupils move each year to maintained schools including a selective grammar school, while leavers from Year 8 move to a range of independent boarding schools.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following tables.

### 1.6 Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Lower Foundation	Nursery
Upper Foundation	Reception

***Pre-preparatory Department***

School	NC name
Form 1	Year 1
Form 2	Year 2
Form 3	Year 3

***Preparatory Department***

School	NC name
Form 4	Year 4
Form 5	Year 5
Form 6	Year 6
Form 7	Year 7
Form 8	Year 8

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

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

- 2.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievement is good. Pupils of all ages, abilities and needs are successfully educated. The school amply fulfils its aims. Pupils develop good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across a broad range of subjects and activities, in a stimulating and supportive educational environment in which each child is given every encouragement to do his or her best. Outcomes in the EYFS are excellent; children are enthusiastic, happy learners who progress well in relation to their starting points and develop skills for the future. Overall, the extensive curriculum and interesting range of extra-curricular activities make an excellent contribution to the quality of pupils' achievement and learning. As a choir school, music is a significant strength and achievement is high. The good, often excellent, teaching, the individual attention possible in small classes, and the way in which staff share their enthusiasm and knowledge all enable pupils to make good progress. Pupils of all ages enjoy their learning. They listen carefully and attentively in class, they are articulate and confident when speaking, and their skills in reading and writing and the application of mathematics are strongly developed. Specialist learning support is effectively organised and successful, while able, gifted and talented pupils are given, from an early age, activities with additional challenge.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development across the school is excellent. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstandingly well developed. The life of the school is underpinned by the Christian faith and a respect for others. Pupils are perceptive and thoughtful, and have a mature sense of moral and social responsibility. They have a well-developed awareness of beauty and creativity. Both boarders and day pupils of all ages benefit from excellent pastoral care, support and guidance. They respond to the love and care which surrounds them. The effective arrangements for welfare, health and safety and the excellent boarding provision make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
- 2.3 The governing body is very committed to the success of the school and provides sound oversight. Recently, its long-term development planning has taken precedence over its support and monitoring role. Leadership and management across the school are excellent. There is a commitment to continually seeking to raise standards. A new appraisal scheme has been developed and is in the process of implementation. The recommendations of the previous inspection have been successfully addressed, including the regulatory requirements. Parents are extremely supportive of the school and its aims. In the EYFS, links with parents are excellent, and reports are thorough but do not always include targets for improvement. The vast majority are highly appreciative of the excellent care, the high standards of behaviour, the ease of communication which keeps everyone well informed and involved, the range of curricular and extra-curricular activities and the academic standards which their children achieve, often beyond initial expectations.

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

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

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

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

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Extend the present successful system of peer observation of teaching, and develop a regular pattern of appraisal.
2. Ensure that the governing body firmly establishes with the school a pattern of regular communication, monitoring and review.
3. In the EYFS, ensure that written reports consistently include targets for children.

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

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

- 3.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 In line with the aims of the school, pupils are successfully educated. They develop good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across their academic curriculum, and in an ample variety of extra-curricular activities. In both academic and extra-curricular music their level of achievement is excellent.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, outcomes for children are excellent. They are confident and articulate pupils, who think about their answers. Nursery children sound out the letters in their name, and Reception children use their phonic sounds to build words when reading. They count the correct coins to pay for their fruit at snack times. They work together cooperatively and competently at their computers.
- 3.4 From Year 1 onwards, pupils' standards are high in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils are encouraged to think independently and develop enquiring minds. Year 5 gave mature and logical reasons for their responses to questions in English. Their mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well developed. They enjoyed applying their mathematical knowledge and understanding of two- and three-dimensional shapes in an introduction to isometric drawing. Year 7 used computers confidently in a lesson on database construction. Fine creative writing was seen in Year 8. Creativity abounded in the art room.
- 3.5 Pupils are successful in games and sports, in and out of school. They achieve high standards in musical activities. The significant demands on Cathedral choristers lead to their development of good organisational skills and self-discipline; their example encourages others. Pupils who need additional help receive sympathetic and relevant support and meet with success, as do gifted and talented pupils who are given special extension work. Recent 11+ and 13+ successes, and music scholarships to senior independent schools with highly competitive entry requirements, indicate that many pupils have excellent all-round achievement.
- 3.6 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national average, but on the evidence available, it is judged to be good overall in relation to national age-related expectations. Although pupils are no longer entered for national tests, results in standardised tests in English and mathematics used by the school, together with scrutiny of their written work and interviews, indicate that each year group has pupils whose attainment is high.
- 3.7 Pupils' level of attainment, as judged, indicates that good progress is made in relation to pupils of similar ability. This is supported by the results of the internal assessment and tracking system which also indicates that pupils make good progress, including those with SEND.
- 3.8 Pupils are enthusiastic, engaged and well motivated to learn. They respond readily to the high expectations of their teachers. During general and subject interviews and in lessons and activities, pupils displayed an eagerness for knowledge, a love of learning and an ability to work constructively on their own or in groups. The choristers with their dedicated and united approach to their duties set an excellent example of positive team work to the school.

- 3.9 The recommendation of the previous inspection to ensure consistency in pupils' learning has been thoroughly met.
- 3.10 Pupils in the EYFS thoroughly enjoy their activities. They have many opportunities for independence and choice throughout the day. The Nursery children benefit from the expertise of older Reception children when singing, doing actions and playing instruments in time in music. Their increasing knowledge of the wider world is evident from their exciting, resourceful and imaginative role play in their outdoor playground equipped with natural and home-made objects.

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

- 3.11 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.12 The curriculum is highly effective in fulfilling the school's aim to offer a broad, varied and stimulating curriculum, both inside and outside the classroom. It caters successfully for the different talents, interests and abilities of the pupils. Music, ICT, French and physical education are all included in the curriculum from Nursery to Year 3, and are taught by specialists. The needs of children in the EYFS are extremely well met. Their curriculum, which covers all six areas of learning, has been enhanced by activities under the new canopy outside their classroom, and their weekly visits, with Years 1 and 2, to an exciting woodland learning environment where they learn how to use tools safely and how to stay out of danger. The school is highly successful in meeting its aim to provide a relevant and up-to-date education, based on traditional values, for girls and boys between the ages of three and thirteen.
- 3.13 From Year 4 upwards, all subjects are taught by specialists, and this contributes to the depth of understanding which pupils achieve and their academic success in subjects such as science, religious studies (RS) and French. A personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) and citizenship course has been introduced throughout the school, and pupils of all ages are enjoying and benefiting from it; they appreciate its application to their broader education. Older pupils value their study skills course, and enjoy their introduction to philosophy in RS.
- 3.14 The range of subjects in the well-planned curriculum covers all requisite areas of learning, and the provision for those with particular needs is well organised and supported by specialist help. This applies to the especially able, as well as to those who are less able. Individual education plans are prepared for pupils to guide and inform both staff and parents. Through careful adjustment to the timetable, the balance of the curriculum has been improved so that academic subjects now have enhanced importance. This successfully addresses a recommendation from the previous inspection.
- 3.15 Musical provision is especially strong; and numerous opportunities, including an excellent choir, are available, enabling all pupils to become actively involved and develop high level skills. Choristers, both boys and girls, benefit from an exceptional training which enhances their learning across all other areas of the curriculum.
- 3.16 The pupils' education is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sporting, musical, dramatic, art and technological options; this results in an extremely high level of participation amongst the pupils. In addition, a number of external visits, both locally and further afield, add significantly to the pupils' experiences. Year 7 pupils described with great enthusiasm how much they had seen and learned on their Year 6 residential geography trip and how this applied to

their present work in science. The choristers and other musicians have excellent encouragement to develop their gifts and interests. Enthusiastic games players enjoy participating in school teams and being spectators at professional matches. The residential visits and the opportunities for occasional boarding help to prepare non-boarders for senior school, and further develop their independence.

- 3.17 Links with the community are strong. The very close relationship with Ripon Cathedral is of huge importance; the boy choristers sing at five Cathedral services during the week, and the girl choristers on two occasions weekly. The musical outreach programme run by the school has involved major collaborations with three local primary schools. The choristers are much in demand to perform at events and festivals; the boy and girl choristers sang at the recent installation of the Mayor of Ripon. The school is proud of the funds its pupils raise for charities, local and international.

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

- 3.18 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.19 Teaching is effective in promoting pupils' achievement and progress. Teaching was almost always at least good, and in a significant number of lessons it was excellent. It enables pupils to make good progress both in the short and long term, and fulfils the aims of the school by encouraging excellence and achievement in each child, in order to achieve the best possible academic results.
- 3.20 In the best lessons, teaching is well planned and closely based on a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs. Staff have suitable material ready for individual pupils when necessary, and also ensure that each is included at appropriate points in the lesson. Teachers show enthusiasm and commitment, they have excellent subject knowledge and they employ a suitably varied range of tasks to encourage learning. Pupils benefit from the good use made of resources and facilities in the specialist rooms. Staff exploit opportunities for external visits linked to the curriculum, such as the Year 3 visit to a rainforest environment. Lesson time is effectively planned with an appropriate balance of direct teaching, and opportunities for pupils to think and reason for themselves, which develop their good independent study skills. A particular strength of the best teaching is the use of well-paced, targeted questioning that very effectively elicits responses, and leads pupils to a deeper understanding, and a desire to learn more.
- 3.21 From the earliest stages, excellent relationships exist between pupils and teachers. This significant feature, together with small classes, contributes to the pupils' academic success. In discussions, pupils consistently reported that they feel supported and confident in their learning. This was clearly evident in classroom observation. Teachers' high expectations ensure that pupils' attitudes and behaviour in and around the school are excellent.
- 3.22 Marking is extremely effective in helping pupils to make progress. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect, as are suggestions for ways in which work may be improved. Pupils commented on the helpful guidelines they are given to develop their work. The carefully considered marking policy is applied consistently across the school.
- 3.23 The school's assessment systems are extremely effectively managed and highlight pupils' individual progress and needs. Information collected through standardised tests in mathematics and English, and through regular class tests and assessments

in all subjects, is used effectively by teachers to adapt their teaching so that pupils make good progress. This consistent tracking and monitoring allows appropriate support to be given for those with special needs, and extension activities to be available to those with particular gifts and talents.

- 3.24 In response to the previous inspection, the use of ICT in teaching has developed, while the library, in a central and accessible position, attractively refurbished and with updated stock, is now a valuable teaching resource.
- 3.25 The overall effectiveness of the teaching in supporting learning in the EYFS is excellent. Children have many opportunities to develop their thinking and solve problems. Staff provide children with interesting and challenging experiences within a colourful environment across every area of learning. Resources are accessible and efficiently used to support learning. A good balance of child- and adult-initiated activities is carefully planned, according to children's needs and interests, indoors and outdoors. The stimulating outdoor environment is particularly beneficial, promoting imaginative, resourceful and open-ended learning experiences. Assessment is used well to adapt tasks to the individual children.
- 3.26 In their questionnaire responses, pupils indicated positively that their teachers helped them to learn, and gave them individual help when they needed it, that they were encouraged to do things for themselves and to work independently. Inspection evidence supported these views.

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

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

- 4.1 The personal development of pupils across the school is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' personal development is entirely in accordance with the stated aims of the school to provide for, within a Christian ethos, the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of every child, and to cultivate confidence and independence in each.
- 4.3 Pupils are confident and self-aware, they appreciate non-material aspects of life and they are emotionally mature for their age. The school promotes a clear set of shared values based on the Christian faith. As they progress through the school, pupils are encouraged to reflect on these foundations through opportunities for discussion in lessons such as RS and PSHEE, as well as in school assemblies and acts of worship in the Cathedral. Choristers benefit enormously from the opportunity to worship almost daily in the Cathedral, and they appreciate that privilege. Pupils are introduced to world faiths and show respect as they openly discuss differences between faiths. They show a healthy thirst for understanding and enjoy philosophical questions and discussions in RS lessons.
- 4.4 Through their positive and supportive behaviour, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and they appreciate the needs of others. Their moral development is excellent. They are given clear guidelines as to how to behave, which they respect as being important. They take a serious view of any antisocial behaviour and they understand that it is unacceptable. They develop a mature understanding of moral dilemmas through the many opportunities given for discussion throughout the curriculum.
- 4.5 The social development of the pupils is excellent. Children in the EYFS are extremely well mannered and their behaviour is exemplary because they know what is expected of them. In their day-to-day life, they are co-operative and happy to share and play confidently and safely together. Children learn to lead a healthy lifestyle and develop skills for the future. They know the benefits of healthy foods and wash their hands before eating. Pupils throughout the school respond very well to one another, developing strong friendships in the small tightly-knit community.
- 4.6 Older pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility and they relish opportunities to contribute to the school society, not least through the school council which has representatives from Year 3 upwards. Pupils in Year 8 have special responsibility as prefects, each with specific duties which they take very seriously, though other senior pupils too understand their role in supporting younger members of the school. In their questionnaire responses, pupils indicated positively that they were given a chance to take responsibility.
- 4.7 Pupils also contribute to the wider society through outreach work in music, and through charity fund raising, much of which they arrange themselves. Recent projects have included raising money for scuba diving for the disabled, and for a local children's hospice. Pupils are conscious of the needs of others, and they take a pride in their efforts to help them. Form teachers encourage an interest in news and current affairs, and pupils develop an awareness of political and economic issues.

- 4.8 Pupils' cultural development is strong. They have an excellent understanding of Western European culture, especially through first-hand experience of literature, music and art from which all benefit greatly. Choristers have the additional privilege of immersing themselves in some of the finest music within that tradition - a gift which will bring life-long enrichment. Pupils develop an understanding and appreciation of a diversity of cultures. They demonstrated understanding of aspects of Buddhism in written work and class discussions in RS. Projects in art, such as a detailed study of paintings by Botticelli and their original frames, also draw very effectively on traditions beyond those of their own time and culture.

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

- 4.9 The quality of pastoral care provided is excellent.
- 4.10 The aim to provide a secure and happy environment, in which all pupils can grow in confidence and where all care for each other, is very successfully achieved from the EYFS onwards.
- 4.11 The framework of pastoral care, based on the role of the form teacher, then of heads of houses and in turn pastoral leaders, successfully ensures that each pupil is supported academically and personally throughout their lives at school. The established ethos is one where staff know all the pupils well and any member of staff helps as occasion demands. In the EYFS, supportive, caring and conscientious adults help children to develop effectively.
- 4.12 Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are excellent. There are no barriers across the age range. Pupils, if they have a concern, will readily turn to a member of staff, or perhaps a prefect. Boarders and choristers form particularly strong bonds, and this positively influences the sense of community across the whole school.
- 4.13 Pupils have many opportunities for regular exercise and greatly enjoy the delicious, healthy home-made meals produced from the school kitchen.
- 4.14 Policies to promote good behaviour and to guard against bullying are compliant, and procedures and guidelines are thoroughly implemented. An appropriate code of conduct, with suitable rewards and sanctions, is understood by pupils and underpins their excellent behaviour. Pupils learn good manners and behaviour from classroom discipline, and at social and community events such as mealtimes and assemblies. Lunch and supper are particularly pleasant occasions where pupils and staff come together in a relaxed and sociable environment. A current three-year plan supports the needs of pupils with SEND, in regard to access to the school buildings, communication within the school and the fullest inclusion in school life. Examples of good practice were observed during the inspection.
- 4.15 Pupils' views are heard through a monthly school council; pupils are pleased that many of their suggestions are adopted. Pupils also appreciate the 'worry box', should they wish to remain anonymous. In responses to their questionnaire, pupils indicated that teachers showed concern for them personally and that they, including the boarders, definitely liked being at school.

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

- 4.16 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.

- 4.17 All the required policies, documents and records exist and are compliant. The arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective. Policies and procedures are well known to, and understood by, staff. In particular, safeguarding arrangements have regard to official guidance and fully cover the needs of the school. All staff have been trained in child protection, and have regular refresher courses. Designated child protection officers have appropriate training at the higher level, and undergo refresher training every two years. Measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are comprehensively applied, and a full range of risk assessments covers the school premises, and the activities engaged in by the pupils.
- 4.18 The provision for pupils who are ill is excellent. The sickroom is well equipped and medical assistance is available throughout the day. Emergency cover is available at all other times. An appropriate policy and arrangements support the needs of those with special educational needs or disabilities. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored.
- 4.19 The regulatory recommendations from the previous reports: staff training for fire risk protection, an annual review of safeguarding by the governing body, boarding-related training for the matrons and staff training in the administration of medicines: have all been met. Safeguarding training requirements for the EYFS are now fully met.
- 4.20 In the EYFS, children's welfare is promoted effectively and they are carefully safeguarded. The children feel secure and safe in their setting, and risk assessments, particularly those for the outdoors environment are thorough and comprehensive.

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

- 4.21 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.22 Pupils say that they greatly enjoy boarding and feel very much part of the boarding community within the school. Relationships between boarders and between boarders and boarding staff are excellent. The older boarders, as with the choristers, care for the younger ones and all contribute to a family atmosphere of mutual care and respect, and to the open and trusting ethos which are the aims of the school for the boarding house.
- 4.23 Boarding parents positively endorsed their children's enjoyment of boarding and the contribution that boarding makes to the strong personal and academic progress made by their children. The boarders are confident, tolerant, increasingly self-reliant and self-motivating, with an extremely positive attitude to the whole of their school lives. In turn, the presence and example of the boarders has a beneficial effect on the wider school community, and on the achievement of the aims it seeks to promote in all its pupils.
- 4.24 The boarders are, and feel, extremely well cared for by the excellent boarding staff team who are a familiar and constant adult presence, at the heart of the boarding family. They maintain the continuity of attitudes and routine for the boarders, as well as providing for the daily and particular needs of their charges, whether they are full, weekly, or one or two night occasional boarders. Boarders are encouraged to maintain an energetic and varied routine. They are provided with plentiful, healthy meals, responding where possible to the boarders' preferences.

- 4.25 The facilities within the boarding house include comfortable, secure accommodation in small dormitories, a newly sited common room with TV, a kitchen for making snacks and drinks, and a games room for the older boarders. As well as the whole school activities, other activities and some school facilities are available to boarders in free time during the afternoon and evening and at weekends, when occasionally a trip out is also arranged. Importantly, given the busy routine of choristers and musicians, a break in the week is made on Wednesdays when they have no prep or Cathedral commitments. The free time created can be used as each boarder wishes. There may be an opportunity for watching a DVD, and traditionally, there is an issue of tuck after supper.
- 4.26 Although most boarders do not go home during the week, they can communicate with home via email or by phone. Parents confirm that it is easy to maintain contact with their child at school, and that the school communicates effectively with them.
- 4.27 All the required policies relating to the National Minimum Standards for boarding are fully compliant and carefully implemented, particularly with regard to safeguarding, the welfare of boarders, staffing, management of behaviour and the prevention of bullying. Boarders know what to do in the event of bullying. Clear expectations for behaviour are set out in the boarding code of conduct, and boarders all appreciate and follow the rules and directions set down for the smooth running of the house. The recommendations from the previous reports, to improve staff training over the keeping and issuing of medication, and training for the boarding role have been successfully addressed.
- 4.28 The aims for the boarding house are set out in the new Boarders' Handbook. Boarding is very well run. Boarders' views are sought regularly, and the boarding staff review current systems and plan future improvements. The recent provision of a Year 8 common room was in response to a suggestion by pupils. The boarding arrangements are entirely suitable, and ensure an excellent boarding experience for all involved as well as ideal support for the responsibilities of the choristers to the Cathedral. Every effort is made to ensure that the choristers, from the youngest to the oldest, are looked after with the greatest possible care.
- 4.29 In their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires, boarders and their parents were overwhelmingly positive. The boarders were unanimous that they enjoyed boarding and got on well together in the house. Almost all their responses agreed that they have plenty to do in the evenings and at weekends, that they are well looked after if they are ill or injured, and that it is easy to contact family and friends. Most appreciated the suppers and breakfasts, but would like more opportunity to make snacks or drinks when they wish. Parents completely agreed that the school keeps their children safe and that boarding staff can easily be contacted. Inspection evidence concurred with these views.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The governing body have strong links with the school and a deep commitment to it. Over recent months, they have been highly involved in plans for its future development, and their aim to build a new school on a new site. Consequently, their attention to the regular business and running of the school has been more distant than they would have wished.
- 5.3 The governing body receives comprehensive and regular reports from the headmaster and thereby has oversight of all sections of the school, including the EYFS, and how successfully aims are being met. An education and a health and safety committee also report back to the main body. The governors have adequately met their responsibility for maintaining educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources, and also for exercising a supporting and monitoring role. However, this has been less thorough than they would have liked, while their attention has been focused on its strategic development plan, created in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection. An advisory group of governors and others with relevant professional expertise has been formed to assist in this initiative. The design stage of the new school and site, is currently being discussed with staff.
- 5.4 The governors have an increasing insight into the working of the school through recently appointed parent members who are gaining a deeper knowledge, from the EYFS onwards, which will enable them to provide further support. In a recent initiative, a class has been shadowed for the day. The chaplaincy role of a governor appointed by the Cathedral enhances the well-being of staff and pupils, particularly the choristers.
- 5.5 The governing body, with the assistance of senior management, has met its statutory responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety in the school. Policies and procedures are reviewed annually by the school governors.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent overall.
- 5.7 The leadership and management of the school are highly effective; they have fulfilled the aims of the school outstandingly well. They have provided a happy, secure environment for all pupils, day and boarding.
- 5.8 The senior leadership, strongly supported by the senior management team, has provided the school with clear educational direction. With the invaluable assistance of the entire staff, they have taken the school forward to further success. In cooperation with the Cathedral staff, choristers are receiving a musical education of the highest quality, which reflects on, and enhances the education and musical opportunities of the rest of the school. Pupils are successfully prepared for competitive entry to senior schools, and the excellent number of successes and

scholarship awards they achieve bears testimony to the school's promotion and encouragement of excellence and achievement. The high quality of pupils' personal development, and of the care afforded to the choristers and boarders also reflects the quality of the leadership and management.

- 5.9 At all levels, delegated responsibilities, particularly those for policy implementation and the safeguarding of pupils, have been extremely conscientiously addressed. Policies have a review date and are kept up to date to the greatest extent possible. Well-qualified staff are recruited, and the loyal and committed teaching, administration, nursing, boarding, catering, housekeeping and ground staff make an important contribution to the happiness and success of the pupils. Staff are well trained for their roles in safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. There are appropriate arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, governors and others and the central register is correctly maintained.
- 5.10 The individual skills within the senior management team and the staff have been used to good effect. The role of subject coordinators has been strengthened, as recommended by the previous inspection; they have an allocation of funds and perform an effective role. Major efforts have been made in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, in order to uphold the school's high academic standards and traditions of helping each individual child. In-service training for staff and self-evaluation of teaching are recognised as important elements. A recently introduced initiative of peer observation of teaching has proved a very effective means of developing skills and techniques. An appraisal scheme has been planned and initiated, but has not yet been fully implemented.
- 5.11 Senior management and subject coordinators have worked with the entire staff as a team to extend the opportunities for their pupils in every way possible. They have created a community where adults, children and young people live together in mutual respect, sharing a love of music, of the Cathedral, and above all of learning.
- 5.12 In the EYFS, leadership and management are excellent. Conscientious staff have a clear vision, enthusiastically embracing new initiatives and training opportunities to enable the setting to move forward and continuously striving for improvement and success through effective self-evaluation. Staff plan and use resources effectively. Policies to promote equality and eliminate discrimination are strongly implemented, ensuring that all children are provided for according to their individual needs.
- 5.13 Links with parents are excellent. The proportion of highly positive responses and comments in both the parents' and pupils' questionnaires bear witness to this. Parents, in their questionnaire responses and in conversation, indicated positively that they are very happy with the education and support provided for their children, and with the quality of communication with the school. They are pleased with their children's progress, the curriculum, the range of extra-curricular activities, and the high standards of behaviour achieved. They agreed that their children feel safe and happy at school and are well looked after. They were pleased with the encouragement they receive to be involved in the life and aspects of the work of the school, the ready availability of information, the timely response to queries and the good handling of any concerns. A very small minority of parents had concerns about bullying, and did not feel that the most able children received appropriate support, however inspection evidence did not support these concerns. A few disagreed that their children received appropriate homework for their age, but staff monitor this well. Written comments were overwhelmingly complimentary.

- 5.14 The senior management team and staff are very approachable and readily accessible. They care deeply about pupils and their families; as a result the school has a constructive and strong relationship with its parents. Parents feel that staff have a thorough knowledge of their children, and that they receive excellent support and advice with their choice of senior schools. Concerns are handled with care, speedily and efficiently, and in accordance with published procedures.
- 5.15 In the EYFS, excellent links provide many opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning and they are very happy with the education provided. Replies to the parents' questionnaire were highly positive. Reporting to parents is thorough, but does not consistently include targets for improvement.
- 5.16 The quality of communication from the school is excellent. Parents and prospective parents of pupils are provided with the required information in useful and informative prospectuses and handbooks. They appreciate the detailed reports sent home, and consider that the grading system is accurate and helpful. Form teachers are in regular contact with parents, who say that it is easy to contact and communicate with staff. A real partnership is formed between school and home.
- 5.17 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. They appreciate recent efforts to integrate the whole school into the life of the Cathedral. Pupils and their families enjoy carol singing and half-termly whole school assemblies. New parents are warmly welcomed into the school community and to Parent-Teacher Association social events and seasonal celebrations. These events are enjoyed by pupils, parents, grandparents and staff, and on some occasions, by former pupils and parents.
- 5.18 Parents greatly appreciate the many opportunities their children have, within a choir school, to experience playing musical instruments and choral singing, and the encouragement they receive to participate in many sporting activities, thus giving them confidence which helps them embrace all that their senior school will offer. They consider that the almost tangible family atmosphere of the school, where children of all ages happily interact, is an important strength.
- 5.19 **What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**