



Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Exeter Cathedral School

February 2024

School's details

School	Exeter Cathedral School		
DfE number	878/6000		
Registered charity number	1151444		
Address	Exeter Cathedral School The Chantry Palace Gate Exeter Devon EX1 1HX		
Telephone number	01392 255298		
Email address	reception@exetercs.org		
Headteacher	Mr James Featherstone		
Chair of governors	Mr Charles Beer		
Proprietor	Exeter Cathedral School Ltd		
Age range	3 to 13		
Number of pupils on roll	217		
	Day pupils	210	Boarders 7
	EYFS	24	Pre-Prep 49
			Prep 144
Date of inspection	21 February 2024		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Exeter Cathedral School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in the centre of the city of Exeter. Founded in 1179 as a boys' choir school, non-choristers were admitted in the 1960s, and the school became co-educational in 1994. The school is a limited company and registered charity, overseen by a board of governors. The chair of governors was appointed in June 2023.
- 1.2 The school comprises nursery, pre-preparatory and preparatory departments and includes an early years setting. There is one boarding house with separate accommodation for female and male boarders. Boarders may board full time, weekly or flexibly.
- 1.3 There are 35 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for four pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The school's previous inspection was an education quality and focused compliance inspection, which took place in May 2019, followed by an additional inspection in April 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.4 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the additional visit on 20 April 2023. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 14	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 8]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standards.
- 2.4 Leaders and staff implement the safeguarding policy and procedures effectively. Staff receive appropriate training that is in line with local procedures and frequently updated to promote understanding of current national guidance. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has an appropriately senior position within the school and is suitably trained in accordance with local requirements. The school has appointed suitable deputies to the DSL to ensure continuity in their absence.
- 2.5 Staff provide effective support for pupils that takes into account pupils' ages, needs and circumstances, including those of boarders and children in early years. In discussions, pupils, including boarders, readily identified a range of adults they could talk to, in addition to a number of other ways they could raise concerns, such as through worry boxes. Boarders confirmed they had made use of the independent listener and felt that this contact was effective. Pupils expressed confidence that they are listened to when they express concerns. Records of safeguarding support these views and show that suitable action is taken, if necessary, when a pupil shares a concern.
- 2.6 Pupils have an appropriate understanding of how to stay safe when online and the school implements suitable systems to monitor and filter their access to the internet. Although incidents of child-on-child abuse are very rare in the context of the school, leaders have implemented effective procedures to manage and record these. The school has appropriate procedures in place to monitor pupils' welfare and to identify when and if these become safeguarding concerns. Appropriate records are maintained and support is provided when needed. The school actively engages with external agencies to ensure pupils' needs are met effectively.
- 2.7 Staff understand and adhere to the code of conduct set out by the school and understand how to appropriately escalate any concerns they might have about colleagues, including senior leaders. A suitable procedure exists for handling allegations against any adult working with pupils. Governors maintain appropriate oversight of safeguarding through regular visits to the school to meet with leaders, staff and pupils. They require suitable recruitment checks on staff. They have received appropriate and timely training and undertake reviews of both the safeguarding policy and its implementation at their termly meetings.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 9]

- 2.8 The school meets the standards.
- 2.9 The school has a suitable written risk assessment policy that is implemented effectively. Staff and governors have received appropriate training on how and when to assess risk and what actions should be taken to mitigate risks in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, staff and visitors.

Suitable risk assessments are in place in relation to the school premises, trips, pupil supervision and welfare. These ensure suitable actions are taken to reduce risks identified. Leaders and managers, including governors, now appropriately consider wider aspects of risk assessment at a strategic level, including with regard to the way complaints are handled.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

2.10 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 14]

2.11 The school meets the standards.

2.12 The school has an appropriate, written complaints policy which includes clear timescales for responding to concerns raised by parents.

2.13 Leaders and staff, and now governors, as a result of systematic training, understand and implement the policy and procedures fully and consistently. These procedures include a three-stage process consisting of informal and formal complaints and a hearing before a panel of three people not involved in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the leadership and management of the school. Leaders and staff adhere to the timescales set out in the policy and ensure appropriate records are kept with suitable confidentiality. Where actions are taken as a result of a complaint, leaders ensure these are recorded and implemented fully. Governors maintain appropriate oversight of the management of complaints.

2.14 Suitable arrangements are made to handle boarders' complaints.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 2]

2.15 The school meets the standards.

2.16 The proprietor, through its appointed governors, ensures that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. The school's action plan has been fully implemented. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are now met. Governors monitor the leadership, management and delivery of boarding and ensure it is effective. They actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. They visited different areas of the school, and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.