

School inspection report

4 to 6 June 2024

Christ Church Cathedral School

3 Brewer Street

Oxford

OX1 1QW

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors and leaders actively promote the wellbeing of pupils in their care. They evaluate their effectiveness to identify areas for improvement, in line with the school's aims and ethos. They exhibit an appropriate understanding and have implemented effective monitoring in a number of areas of their work. For example, leaders ensure that there is a robust approach to managing the school site, including health and safety, and fire risk arrangements. However, leaders and governors are not ensuring that all the Standards are met consistently.
2. The school welcomes pupils at various stages of their educational journey from a variety of backgrounds, including from education systems outside England. Teachers support these pupils to learn and settle effectively. However, leaders are not aware of the requirement to inform the local authority of the admissions of pupils at non-standard transition points throughout the year.
3. Pupils access a suitable curriculum, taught by knowledgeable teachers. Teachers plan appropriate lessons, assess work and provide feedback to help pupils make good progress from their varied starting points.
4. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes also receive a well-organised and well-resourced curriculum. Adults support the youngest children to develop a range of skills, including in their early language and communication. Professional supervision meetings for staff working with children in the early years take place. However, their organisation is not systematic and, consequently, does not provide a full range of support for adults' professional development.
5. Over time, pupils develop confidence, self-awareness, and positive relationships with their staff and other pupils. They are taught about the importance of respect, tolerance and kindness. They particularly appreciate the rich variety of cultural backgrounds represented in the school. Pupils generally behave well and demonstrate excellent manners. However, a small number of pupils sometimes behave in a disruptive manner in class and occasionally act in an unkind manner to other pupils during recreational periods. Some staff are inconsistent in how they apply school policy when managing pupil behaviour.
6. Boarders value the boarding community. The support provided by adults in boarding is of a high quality and consequently boarders enjoy the warm, family-like atmosphere. Boarders have age-appropriate levels of independence as well as the time for recreation.
7. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they get to play a positive role in wider society. For example, the school has a close connection to Christ Church Cathedral. Boarding choristers sing five days out of seven during term time as well as in the Easter and Christmas seasons. Day pupils also audition to join choirs which serve the chapels at Pembroke and Worcester Colleges. Consequently, many pupils perform to a high level of ability in both choral and instrumental music.
8. Pupils, through their curriculum, assemblies and a range of other activities learn to understand their role as citizens in British society, and to be ready for their transition to their next school. Older pupils' learning about careers is less well planned and pupils do not routinely develop a thorough early understanding about the pathways towards employment.

9. Procedures for safeguarding are robust. Appropriate recruitment practices for adults working with pupils are followed. Minor administrative errors were identified and corrected during the inspection. Leaders and governors had not identified these issues when undertaking their own monitoring.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- the local authority is always informed within five days of a pupil joining the school at a non-standard transition point.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should ensure that:

- arrangements for professional supervision meetings for early years practitioners are systematic to better support their professional development
- pupils' behaviour is managed more consistently by adults, whether in or out of the classroom, to further improve the standards of behaviour demonstrated by a small core of pupils
- provision for careers education for older pupils is thoroughly planned so that they have a better understanding of the potential pathways to the world of work
- ensure that rigorous checks of the record of staff appointments identify and rectify any errors in a timely manner.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors and leaders engage in self-evaluation as they seek both to further improve the quality of the education provided, and to promote the wellbeing of all pupils, including the boarders. Leaders and governors promote the school's ethos with an emphasis on kindness and tolerance, which is realised in the assemblies led both in school and in the cathedral by school leaders and the cathedral precentor who serves as the school chaplain.
11. Governors monitor the work of leaders through regular meetings, before which reports are prepared on various aspects of school provision. Governors, including those with educational experience, question leaders to ensure that they are carrying out their roles effectively. Those with expertise in areas such as buildings oversee operational aspects, for example maintenance and refurbishment programmes.
12. Leaders appoint suitably qualified and experienced staff to teach, supervise and care for pupils. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning through observation and encourage teachers to engage in ongoing appropriate professional development.
13. Leaders know the pupils and children at the school well and are aware of their individual needs. This includes the many pupils who join at non-standard transition points, some of whom benefit from swiftly arranged additional support. Leaders monitor assessments both for individual pupils and for cohorts, including the cathedral choristers, to evaluate the progress they are making and to identify areas of the curriculum which may require adaptation.
14. Leaders ensure that the boarding provision is well led. The boarding house is a warm, supportive environment which promotes the learning, development and wellbeing of the boarders.
15. Leaders and governors also promote musical excellence and participation because of the choral programmes in place. Leaders collaborate with the cathedral music team to ensure that the choristers' wellbeing is actively supported whilst they carry out their singing duties, whether within the cathedral or performing further afield both within the United Kingdom and internationally.
16. Leaders in the early years support and enable teachers and other responsible adults to carry out their roles with children. Although professional supervision meetings do take place, leaders do not ensure that these occur systematically enough to provide meeting the full range of professional development needs for staff working with children in the early years.
17. Governors and leaders understand, consider and actively mitigate a range of risks in order to further promote the wellbeing of pupils. For example, they consider the school's precise location and act to reduce the risks. Leaders have appropriate knowledge of most aspects of statutory guidance and the requirements of the Standards but do not understand the requirements in full. They do not ensure that the local authority is informed of pupils joining the school at non-standard transition points.
18. Leaders understand and discharge their responsibilities under the Equality Act and have developed an appropriate accessibility plan that is routinely reviewed and amended.
19. Leaders share appropriate information with parents and other relevant stakeholders, whether through the website or by direct communication. Leaders send home regular reports on the progress of pupils. There are few complaints which reach a formal stage but, when they do arise,

leaders deal with them in a timely manner in line with school policy, as are concerns shared at an initial, informal level.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

20. Standards are not met consistently with respect to leaders having the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure that the local authority is informed of pupils joining the school at non-standard transition points.
21. As a result, Standards relating to leadership and management are not met.
- 22. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders organise a suitable curriculum which promotes pupils' learning in the core areas of linguistic, mathematical and scientific understanding. This is augmented by a range of subjects at various ages, encompassing classical languages, reasoning, music and the creative arts, and physical education. Leaders in the early years promote an appropriate learning experience which supports the children's acquisition and development of key skills.
24. Curriculum leaders and teachers explore connections between subjects through cross-curricular projects, for example the study of pirates in Year 1. The curriculum is evaluated and adapted, for example a recent review of the English and history syllabi for older pupils led to changes to broaden and update the range of topics covered.
25. Teachers are knowledgeable and experienced regarding their subjects. They use this knowledge and experience to plan and teach lessons which enable pupils to make good progress. They assess pupils' work on a regular basis, providing verbal and written encouragement as well as suggestions as to what they could do better next time. This feedback is valuable to pupils as they consider how to make further progress in their learning.
26. Teachers adapt learning tasks to match the pupils' needs. Teachers provide precise support to pupils who need additional help. Teachers effectively meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language through a range of resources and interventions which help pupils to access the curriculum, and these pupils make rapid progress acquiring the language skills they need to learn. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also have their needs met in a number of ways, including the deployment of additional adults in the classroom to support their learning. These pupils generally make progress in line with their peers.
27. Teachers support and encourage pupils to stretch themselves in their learning, giving pupils opportunities to apply their learning with greater complexity. Teachers challenge pupils to find answers for themselves, for example when younger pupils are encouraged to find spellings from a dictionary. In other lessons, pupils choose to undertake additional creative or discursive writing challenges in English. Teachers encourage pupils to contribute to a magazine encompassing a range of articles, book and film reviews, puzzles, creative writing, poetry and artwork which has been instigated and is curated by pupils with minimal supervision. Pupils take part in national competitions, for example in mathematics.
28. Children in the early years develop appropriately in their communication, phonics and mark-making skills, as well as in their numeracy. For example, teachers devise activities in which children draw patterns in order to develop their fine motor skills and, in a project to grow sunflowers, children count out the available pots and seeds to share between them. Children develop gross motor skills and their fitness through their physical education lessons. Children are ready to move onto Year 1 by the end of Reception.
29. Pupils periodically take standardised tests which help leaders to monitor the progress pupils are making over time, both individually and as cohorts. Internal examinations are set at the end of each academic year to show older pupils, their parents and teachers the extent to which pupils have learned the subjects taught. Pupils leave to progress to a range of senior schools, the majority of which have competitive entry procedures, and a number of pupils achieve scholarships,

predominantly for music but also for other disciplines and for their academic attainment and potential.

30. Many pupils achieve high standards of musicianship and performance skill, and score highly in graded examinations. These include but are not limited to those who sing in one of the three college-based choirs. As well as acquiring a high level of vocal skill, these choristers develop an acute understanding of musical style and absorb a large repertoire of choral music.
31. Pupils experience a suitable range of extra-curricular activities which include sporting clubs and a number of musical ensembles in addition to the college-based choirs. Children in the early years also have a range of appropriate activities which they pursue after the end of the school day.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 32. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

33. The physical education curriculum teaches pupils skills in a range of sporting disciplines. This includes weekly swimming lessons for the younger pupils at a nearby facility, and older pupils also take part in team matches against other schools.
34. Pupils have adults they are confident to speak to if they have concerns about their wellbeing, and can arrange to see an independent counsellor at school if they wish. This individual also acts as the independent listener for boarders, visiting the boarding house and attending services in the cathedral on occasion to become better known to the boarding community.
35. Leaders in the school and cathedral music team carefully monitor the workload of the cathedral choristers. Leaders also adapt and reduce the choristers' commitments, for example by making allowances regarding homework deadlines after concerts, when it is felt this is appropriate for their wellbeing.
36. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness through the programme of assemblies. Teachers also provide opportunities in the classroom, for example a French poem is used effectively to encourage pupils to reflect with sensitivity upon the contributions made by those who took part in the D-Day landings eighty years ago.
37. Pupils across the school, including children in the early years, experience a suitable curriculum of relationships education, on which parents are appropriately consulted. Pupils learn about changing bodies and procreation at appropriate points in their education using resources which have been externally curated and validated. Pupils respond with maturity and appreciate the knowledge this teaching affords them.
38. Leaders promote appropriate behaviour among the pupils and set out a clear programme of age-appropriate rewards and sanctions. There are few incidents of bullying but, when they do occur, leaders act swiftly to resolve them. Most pupils display commendable respect, manners and behaviour towards each other. However, a minority of pupils are occasionally unkind to one another during recreational times, and some pupils cause unnecessary distraction in a few lessons. Some teachers are not consistent in their application of the behaviour policy.
39. Pupils, as they get older, receive appropriate duties as responsibilities as prefects. Pupils understand the clearly delineated roles and responsibilities afforded to them and assist with daily organisation. Senior boarders help younger boarders with their organisation and routines. Senior members of the cathedral choir are responsible for encouraging high standards of behaviour and dress from other choristers, particularly when on public display.
40. Pupils and boarders are well supervised. For example, adults monitor both indoor and outdoor areas during periods of recreation and at the beginning and end of each day. There is a suitable level of staffing in the boarding house, including overnight supervision, to ensure the boarders are well looked after. Choristers are supervised by school staff when they are performing outside of Oxford, including on international tours.

41. Pupils value their education and attend regularly. Leaders monitor any absence. Attendance registers are taken, and appropriate recording and monitoring is in place. Leaders also maintain the admissions register of pupils who join and leave the school. As required, leaders inform the local authority appropriately of pupils who leave the school at non-standard transition points. However, leaders do not inform the local authority when pupils join at non-standard transition points.
42. The school buildings, boarding house, and site are appropriately maintained. Any issues are identified and rectified swiftly. Leaders ensure that all health and safety requirements are met, including fire risks. Risk assessments for the various areas of the school, as well as for trips and pupil movements round Oxford, are comprehensive. The boarding house is suitably furnished. Boarders are able to personalise their own areas as well as store items securely.
43. Staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. The medical needs of the pupils, including boarders, are met appropriately and promptly. There is suitable accommodation for short-term medical needs and first aid. Boarders access medical services outside of the school as they are required.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

44. Standards are not met consistently with respect to leaders ensuring that the local authority is informed of pupils joining the school at non-standard transition points.
- 45. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

46. Leaders ensure that there is a suitable curriculum of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education which, together with a programme of assemblies, teaches pupils effectively about important values such as tolerance, respect, the rule of law and democracy. Pupils are encouraged to be respectful to all people and treat them equally, in accordance with the school's ethos and which is articulated through the school rules. Children in the early years develop their social skills through a range of activities and role play opportunities.
47. Events of national interest, for example the D-Day anniversary, are celebrated, and democratic events such as the general election are commented upon. Leaders ensure that any such presentations are balanced and do not attach weight to any particular political viewpoint.
48. Pupils are elected to the school council which discusses potential improvements to the pupil experience at school. Boarders have regular meetings, and their views are listened to by leaders, for example augmenting the recreational resources in the boarders' common room.
49. Older pupils have lessons regarding careers and the pathways which lead to various types of employment. On occasion, this learning is supplemented by visiting speakers who talk about their careers and speak to pupils on a range of topics. However, these lessons are not as well planned or as detailed as other areas of the curriculum. Older pupils' knowledge in this area is less well developed than in other areas of their learning.
50. Pupils learn about economic and financial literacy in their PSHE education lessons, in mathematics and across the wider curriculum. Teachers introduce topics such as budgeting, personal finance and opening a bank account. Older pupils participate in an enterprise initiative in which they devise and operate a stall at a school fair.
51. Pupils understand right from wrong and take responsibility for their actions, understanding how those actions can affect others. They also learn how they can positively contribute to the lives of others, for example through participating in charity running events and other fundraising endeavours.
52. The choristers in all three choirs appreciate the contribution they make to the experience of those who join the congregation for their services. The cathedral choristers also take part in outreach programmes in which they sing to and alongside children from local schools, with the aim of encouraging more children in the area to derive the benefits of singing enjoyed by the choristers. Older boarders enjoy their roles as senior pupils, helping the younger boarders in their routines and reading to them.
53. The school is a community with a diverse range of cultural backgrounds which are appropriately celebrated and explored. In lessons and assemblies, pupils are taught about these and other cultures in a manner which fosters understanding and respect. For example, Year 1 pupils learn in their Spanish lessons about fiestas and their importance whilst comparing British and Spanish culture, and in religious education lessons Year 7 pupils respectfully compare the attributes of a Sikh Guru with their own experience of teachers.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

55. Leaders develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures to promote the safeguarding of pupils, including boarders and children in the early years. Leaders responsible for safeguarding are suitably trained and experienced. They have the time and support needed to lead the school's provision effectively. Leaders have expanded the team of those trained as safeguarding leads to include those with direct responsibility for boarding, which is providing even more support for boarders outside of the school day.
56. Governors check on the effectiveness of leaders in maintaining and discharging their safeguarding responsibilities. They provide effective oversight of safeguarding by monitoring policies, reviewing reports and meeting regularly to discuss safeguarding procedures. Governors receive appropriate and regular training and carry out their roles.
57. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that all staff receive the required training on a regular basis, as well as on induction for those new to working at the school. Leaders check that staff understand the relevant and up-to-date statutory guidance for the school and boarding provision.
58. Staff at the school know how to look for signs that a pupil's welfare might be at risk, and are confident in their knowledge of how to report their concerns. They know to share concerns about the behaviour of other adults and to report any occasion on which their own behaviour might be called into question.
59. Pupils know that they have a range of adults at school as well as at home with whom they can share any worries that they may have. For boarders, this includes the independent listener who is known to the pupils and is perceived by them to be approachable.
60. Leaders record concerns appropriately using a system which allows them to exercise clear and effective oversight of situations and their chronology, as well as being able to look for patterns. Leaders liaise effectively with parents and seek advice or support for families from relevant external agencies as appropriate.
61. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They learn about safety in their lessons and understand the risks of online activity. Suitable filtering and monitoring software is in place to protect pupils and boarders when working online.
62. Leaders ensure that appropriate processes are in place when new staff are appointed to the school. The necessary checks are undertaken and recorded on a single central record of appointments, which is checked on a regular basis by both leaders and governors. However, leaders and governors do not always spot errors on this record. For example, some administrative errors were identified during the inspection, which were rectified on site.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

63. All the relevant Standards are met.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006(c).
EYFS 3.77	Providers must maintain records, obtain and share relevant information (with parents and carers, other professionals working with the child, the police, social services and Ofsted or their CMA, as appropriate). This is to ensure their setting is safe and efficiently managed, and the needs of all children are met. Providers must enable a regular two-way flow of information with parents and/or carers (and between other providers, if a child is attending more than one setting). If requested, providers should incorporate parents' and/or carers' comments into children's records.

School details

School	Christ Church Cathedral School
Department for Education number	931/6060
Address	Christ Church Cathedral School 3 Brewer Street Oxford OX1 1QW
Phone number	01865 242561
Email address	schooloffice@cccs.org.uk
Website	www.cccs.org.uk
Proprietor	Dean and Canons of Christ Church
Chair	The Very Revd Professor Sarah Foot
Headteacher	Mr Richard Murray
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	137
Number of boarding pupils	20
Date of previous inspection	12 to 13 February 2020

Information about the school

64. Christ Church Cathedral School is a day and boarding school. It is located in central Oxford. The school consists of a Nursery and Pre-Prep School for male and female pupils, and a Prep School for male pupils. The Dean and Canons of Christ Church are the proprietor body. Since the last inspection a new chair was appointed in 2023.
65. The boarding house, which is part of the main school building, accommodates male pupils from ages eight to thirteen.
66. There are 20 children in the early years comprising two Nursery classes and one Reception class.
67. The school has identified 19 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
68. English is an additional language for 34 pupils.
69. The school states its aims are to get the best from every child, by setting high standards, through dynamic teaching, by focusing on the child as an individual, and by ensuring that in all areas of school life there is a positive and encouraging atmosphere where pupils learn to think for themselves and to acquire the skills of independent learning.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 to 6 June 2024

70. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

71. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with the music staff of the cathedral associated with the school
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

72. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net