



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION
WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL**

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Westminster Cathedral Choir School

Full Name of School	Westminster Cathedral Choir School
DfE Number	213/6197
Registered Charity Number	1063761
Address	Westminster Cathedral Choir School Ambrosden Avenue London SW1P 1QH
Telephone Number	020 7798 9081
Email Address	office@choirschool.com
Head	Mr Neil McLaughlan
Chair of Governors	Mr John Gibbs
Age Range	7 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	173
Gender of Pupils	Boys
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 148
Number of Boarders	Total: 25 Full: 25
Ownership and Governance	The school's proprietor, the Diocese of Westminster, delegates responsibility for oversight of the school to a lay governing body which has a range of skills and expertise represented within it.
School Structure	Westminster Cathedral Choir School provides for pupils from the ages of 7 to 13. The boarding house provides accommodation for a group of 25 full-time choristers.
Inspection Dates	6 and 7 October 2015

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

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) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, this inspection records whether the school complies with each of these Regulations, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Compliance is judged both by written formulation and by implementation. The Regulations represent minimum requirements and are given as either 'met' or not 'met'.

Additionally, inspections consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the Education (Abolition of Corporal Punishment) (Independent Schools) Regulations 1989.

This inspection also 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 it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding Standards. It identifies any Standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the Regulations.

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) the school's aims, detailed coverage of the quality of educational provision or pupils' achievement;
- (ii) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (iii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features;
- (iv) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures;
- (v) an 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 mentioned specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

The report reflects the evidence used in deciding whether the school's provision meets or does not meet the various requirements. Grades are not provided for the quality of the school as a whole or for each aspect inspected.

If the school has EYFS registered provision (for children under the age of two), reports use the same evaluative terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.

National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with teachers, senior members of staff and with representatives from the governing body. They 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 Diane Gardiner	Reporting Inspector
Mr Matthew Carter	Compliance Team Inspector (Bursar, IAPS and GSA School)
Mrs Sara Wiggins	Assistant Reporting Inspector

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Westminster Cathedral Choir School was founded in 1902 to educate the choristers of Westminster Cathedral in London. It provides for boys aged 7 to 13, either as day pupils or as choristers who board full time. Some of the teaching rooms and all of the boarding accommodation are housed in a listed building adjacent to Westminster Cathedral; specialist teaching facilities for science and music are housed in accommodation next to the main building. The school currently has 173 pupils, 25 of whom are choristers. The proprietor delegates responsibility for oversight of the school to a governing body, whose members have a range of different backgrounds and expertise.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has developed and introduced a new curriculum, designed to make links across curriculum areas and encourage good reasoning and thinking skills. A programme of refurbishment has modernised facilities in the refectory and boarding house.
- 1.3 Most pupils come from professional families living within 30 miles of the school and have been born in the UK; about a quarter originate from other countries including Italy, Spain, France and the USA. Most pupils join the school at 7 or 8 of age, with others joining at any time when places become available.

2. COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATORY STANDARDS

Part 1 Quality of education provided

Curriculum

- 2.1 The school meets the Regulations.
- 2.2 A recently introduced curriculum policy, supported by schemes of work, has enabled links to be made across different subjects and opportunities for the pupils to develop their reasoning and thinking skills. A range of curriculum documents provides strategies to support the pupils' personal development across all age groups. These arrangements do not undermine British values; and include the study of concepts such as the rule of law, democracy and personal freedoms in other periods of history, allowing pupils to develop awareness of how these affect lives today. [Paragraph 2.(1)]
- 2.3 From Year 3 to Year 8 the curriculum is organised so that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress in all the requisite areas of learning, as well as French and Classics. A range of extra-curricular activities supports the main curriculum. In particular, the specific nature of the school as a choir school provides opportunities to develop specialist skills for music and performance. The curriculum prepares pupils for life in British society. [Paragraphs 2.(2)(a), (b) and (i)]
- 2.4 A structured programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) is provided for all year groups. Weekly PSHEE lessons, a balanced programme of speakers, participation in assemblies and church services, and protected time with form teachers provides the structure for pupils to develop their personal skills, prepare them for the next stage of their education and encourage them to begin to explore options for future careers. [Paragraphs 2.(2)(d) and (e)]
- 2.5 Throughout the school, pupils make good progress overall for pupils of the school's ability range. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those with English as an additional language (EAL) and the more able are suitably supported to reach their potential. [Paragraph 2.(2)(h)]

Teaching

- 2.6 The school meets the Regulations.
- 2.7 Teaching is well planned across the different areas of the curriculum so that pupils develop their understanding and skills. For example, when learning about Cartesian graphs the pupils also learn about Descartes. Pupils of all abilities are enabled to make progress through a range of strategies, including one-to-one support linked to the classroom curriculum or provision of extension activities for the more able. A carefully monitored system of assessment ensures that, when planning work, tasks set are appropriate to the age, ability and needs of each pupil. [Paragraphs 3.(a), (d) and (g)]
- 2.8 The cross-curricular approach, together with teachers' secure knowledge of their subjects and an appropriate range of teaching strategies employed, encourage pupils to make links across different areas of learning and develop strong reasoning skills. This was observed in a mathematics lesson, where pupils were given the time to explore different ways of solving a problem and share their conclusions. As a result

pupils are well motivated and, from an early age, have the confidence to think for themselves. An appropriate range of resources is used to support learning. Marking is consistent, providing positive praise and constructive help for improving in the future. [Paragraphs 3.(b), (c), (e) and (f)]

- 2.9 Lessons in PSHEE, religious education (RE) and other opportunities to share ideas promote a mutual understanding of and respect for the opinions, needs and beliefs of others in society. Across the age range, teaching does not undermine the core values which underpin British society, and ensures that pupils are provided with information that supports their understanding of and respect for these. This results in an environment where everyone is treated equally. [Paragraphs 3.(i) and (j)]
- 2.10 The pupils' attainment is not measured by national tests but by an internal framework, which offers a demanding classical and academic education for all pupils in line with its aims, as well as providing a range of musical opportunities within the context of the relationship with Westminster Cathedral. [Paragraph 4]

How well do pupils achieve?

Pupils' Ability	The average ability profile of the school overall is above the national average.
Pupils' Needs	Fifteen pupils require support for SEND; most of these pupils have support for dyslexia or dyspraxia. None has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Five pupils have been identified as having EAL; only two of these require support for their language skills. Twenty-seven pupils have been identified who are able in a general academic sense, gifted (with a special ability) or talented (in areas such as sports, drama and music).
Pupils' Achievements	The pupils' attainment is not measured by national tests but by the schools own framework of testing.

Part 2 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.11 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.12 In preparing pupils for continuing education through responsibility, experience and opportunity, the school succeeds in actively promoting the common values found in Britain today. Pupils demonstrate strong knowledge of how democracy works and respect for the rule of law, at the same time questioning the fairness of the electoral system. They are aware of the difference between right and wrong and have a strong sense of what is fair. Pupils show respect for each other and their teachers, and work together to support others. All pupils spoken to felt that they would be well supported by staff in resolving any difficulties. [Paragraphs 5.(a), (b)(ii), (vi) and (vii)]
- 2.13 Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities from an early stage, and develop an awareness of their own and others' responsibilities within the school community. Their self-confidence and self-esteem are well developed, as witnessed through animated discussions on a range of topics in interviews and in lessons. Pupils contribute to the running of the school by use of suggestion boxes and through the school council. Boarders contribute to the smooth operation of the boarding house through participating in a range of responsibilities and roles. A small minority of pupils in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their views were not always considered but inspectors found that pupils are given many opportunities to contribute. While studying the necessary characteristics of a good monarch in the medieval period, pupils were able to contrast the skills needed by our current leaders and monarch. Through such opportunities, they develop a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions in England. Visits to the Houses of Parliament and a programme of external speakers provide the pupils with a balanced perspective of all views, including political topics. [Paragraphs 5.(b)(i), (iv), (c), (d), and NMS 17 and 19]
- 2.14 Pupils understand the importance of peace and, through specific lessons and opportunities to share assemblies and mass in the cathedral, they develop a respect for other faiths and cultures and the importance of tolerance of difference. They take an active role in the wider community and internationally by raising money to help those in greater need than themselves. [Paragraphs 5.(b)(iii) and (v)]

What are pupils' views of the school?

Pupils are asked to respond as 'agree' or 'disagree' with the option to specify 'no view' or not to answer individual questions. One hundred and twenty-three pupils responded to part or all of the questionnaire. The table below shows the proportions of pupils who responded 'agree' or 'disagree' in relation to each question, and the number who didn't offer a view.

	% Agree	% Disagree	Number offering no view
School questions			
1. I enjoy school	98	1	4
2. I find my lessons interesting and engaging	94	5	13
3. The school gives me the support I need to learn	98	1	9
4. I can get help if I need it	93	6	8
5. The school encourages me to do my best	98	1	11
6. I feel safe and happy at school	95	4	9
7. My views and ideas are listened to in class and in school	80	20	23

8. Behaviour is good in the school	88	11	22
9. Teachers are fair in the way they give rewards	89	10	8
10. Teachers are fair in the way they give sanctions	91	8	12
11. The school deals with bullying	92	7	13
12. There is a member of staff or senior pupil I can turn to if I have a problem	92	7	15
Boarding questions			
1. I enjoy boarding	95	5	103
2. Boarders get on well together in the house	88	11	106
3. I am well looked after if I fall ill or am injured	100	0	106
4. I am able to contact my family and friends if I need to	94	5	104
5. I like the food in boarding	93	6	107
6. I feel safe in my boarding house	94	5	105
7. I am able to have snacks and drinking water outside main mealtimes	78	21	104
8. I am able to keep my belongings safe	68	31	104
9. Boarding staff treat me fairly	88	11	105
10. I am happy with the balance of free time and activities in the evenings and at weekends	55	44	105

Part 3 Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.15 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.16 Secure arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of both day and boarding pupils at the school. Following some minor amendments to the safeguarding policy prior to the start of the inspection, the policy now contains all the required elements and is available for parents of current and prospective pupils on the school website. Systems in the school support the welfare of the pupils through careful record keeping, monitoring and regular review. Staff are trained in all aspects of safeguarding and pupils are taught about managing dangers from use of the internet, extremism and in daily life. A detailed safe recruitment policy is followed. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that their children are happy, feel safe at school and are well looked after. [Paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), 8.(a) and (b), and NMS 11]
- 2.17 New boarders are provided with a detailed induction process as they start at the school. They are assigned a mentor to whom they can turn to for help and provided with details of an independent listener they can contact should the need arise. Telephone numbers of appropriate helplines are also posted in the boarding house. A small minority of parents felt that contact with boarders is not always simple; however, pupils are confident that they can contact their families and friends easily and in privacy. Food prepared for both day and boarding pupils is plentiful, nutritious and of good quality. A small minority of boarders in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that access to snacks and drinking water is not always easy; inspection evidence does not support this view and found these to be plentiful and appropriate. [NMS 2, 4 and 8]
- 2.18 A small minority of boarders in their questionnaire responses felt that they could not adequately secure their possessions. Inspection evidence confirmed that the procedures in the boarding house were appropriate and a recently introduced safe has improved security further. A minority of boarders and a few of their parents in their questionnaire responses felt that the school does not always achieve a balance between free time, evening and weekend activities, and the necessary factors in the life of a chorister, such as rehearsal, music practice and performance. During the

inspection it became clear that, on a number of occasions, the overrun of music and sporting activities resulted in the loss of some free time. The school is aware of this and has a plan to resolve it. [NMS 9 and 10]

- 2.19 Clearly laid out and consistently applied behaviour and anti-bullying policies promote good behaviour. Since the previous inspection the school has reviewed and updated their rewards and sanctions policy in line with the recommendation at that time. Handbooks for staff and pupils provide clear guidelines as to how the system should be administered, including provision for a verbal warning prior to a demerit being issued. Inspection evidence found the system to be applied according to agreed principles, and carefully monitored. A log of serious sanctions is maintained, including details of action taken. Pupils are confident that if bullying occurred it would be resolved in a constructive manner and an analysis of the bullying log, sanctions applied and action taken supports this. [Paragraphs 9 and 10, and NMS 12]
- 2.20 A health and safety policy, supported by risk assessments for all parts of the school including the boarding house, ensures compliance with all relevant health and safety requirements. Risk assessments are undertaken for trips out and tours undertaken by the choir abroad. Accommodation for both day and boarding pupils is maintained appropriately. [Paragraphs 11 and 16, and NMS 6]
- 2.21 Procedures to reduce the risk of fire are suitably organised and recorded. Fire drills are undertaken twice a term, once during the day and at appropriate times for pupils in the boarding house. Fire equipment including the alarm system is tested and maintained on a regular basis. All teaching staff are trained as fire marshals, and fire safety information is displayed in all areas. [Paragraph 12 and NMS 7]
- 2.22 All academic staff and the two matrons are trained in first aid, updated every three years. The policy covers all required areas to ensure that first aid is delivered in a timely and competent manner. A dedicated first aider with no other duties is on site at all times. Medical boxes are distributed in strategic places and regularly checked. Medicines are stored suitably and care is taken to record when they are administered and to ensure that parents are informed. A carefully maintained accident log records all incidents and the action taken. In addition to first-aid provision on site, boarders also have access to local medical, dental and other specialist services as necessary. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire say they are well looked after when ill. [Paragraph 13 and NMS 3]
- 2.23 Supervision of pupils is suitably organised and managed at all times during the school day, including at break times and lunch. Levels of staffing in the boarding house are appropriate for the age, number and needs of the boarders. Staff know the whereabouts of boarders at all times, and understand and implement the school's policy in relation to children going missing. At night, at least one adult member of staff sleeps in the boarding house and can be contacted by the pupils if necessary. The school does not arrange lodgings. [Paragraph 14 and NMS 15 and 20]
- 2.24 The admission register contains all relevant information and the attendance registers are suitably managed and stored for three years; both are maintained electronically. [Paragraph 15]

Other legislation

- 2.25 Corporal punishment is not used or threatened. [The Education (Abolition of Corporal Punishment) (Independent schools) Regulations 1989]

- 2.26 The school has an accessibility plan to improve information, the curriculum and physical access for pupils with SEND. [Equality Act 2010]

Part 4 Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

- 2.27 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.28 To safeguard pupils and promote their welfare, all the required recruitment checks on staff and supply staff are carried out, an improvement since the previous inspection. These include an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check for all those in regulated activity, a barred list check, the taking up of two references, and checks to see if potential staff, including gap year staff, have been prohibited from working with children. [Paragraphs 18 and 19, and NMS 14.1]
- 2.29 Appropriate checks have been completed to ensure the suitability of the school's proprietor. The single central register of appointments is accurately completed with all necessary checks recorded. [Paragraphs 20 and 21]

Part 5 Premises and accommodation

- 2.30 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.31 Suitable toilets, showers and washing facilities are provided and drinking water is labelled appropriately. Hot water taps are fitted with equipment to ensure that the water is maintained at a suitable temperature. Arrangements for changing and showering are appropriate for the age of the pupils. [Paragraphs 23 and 28]
- 2.32 Accommodation for the care of sick and injured pupils meets their needs. The medical room is suitably organised, is appropriately manned by one of the school matrons and provides a comfortable space for pupils and boarders to rest when ill. [Paragraph 24 and NMS 3.2]
- 2.33 Care is given to the maintenance of each section of the premises and repairs undertaken where appropriate. Internal and external lighting and acoustic standards are suitable. [Paragraphs 25, 26 and 27]
- 2.34 A recently re-surfaced playground offers a safe and secure outdoor space for pupils at break and lunchtimes, and provides for elements of the curriculum for physical education. Off-site facilities are also used, including a local swimming pool. [Paragraph 29]
- 2.35 As a result of a recent programme of refurbishment, the boarding area is bright, well-furnished and clean. The sleeping accommodation is warm and comfortable, and areas for private study and for social purposes are suitable and personalised by the pupils. Toilet and washing facilities are plentiful and provide the appropriate levels of privacy. Use of CCTV cameras is limited to the external areas of the school. [Paragraph 30 and NMS 5]

Part 6 Provision of information

- 2.36 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.37 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with the full range of required information about the school through its website or on request from the school office. A statement of boarding principles and practice is included as well as a handbook, which sets out the details of how this is put into practice. Parents are positive about almost all aspects of the education and care provided for their children, particularly the information they receive about their child's progress. Throughout the school, parents receive detailed reports which provide a record of achievement and targets for future improvement. [Paragraph 32 and NMS 1]

Part 7 Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.38 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.39 Following recent changes made, an appropriate policy is now available on the school website. Complaints are dealt with in line with requirements and documents related to a complaint are recorded in detail and stored, including at which stage it was resolved, the action taken, and whether or not it was upheld. Two formal concerns were resolved at stage two of the procedure during the academic year 2014 to 2015. [Paragraph 33 and NMS 18]

Part 8 Quality of leadership and management

- 2.40 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.41 Leadership and management of the school have worked with all necessary guidance documents to ensure that regulatory requirements have been fully met. In conjunction with members of the governing body, all policies have been re-written in line with recent changes in legislation. A careful programme of monitoring by the senior management team ensures that all policies are fully implemented and that new staff receive induction and training on safeguarding matters.
- 2.42 Since the previous inspection a group of middle leaders has been appointed to provide mentors for all staff and assist with the monitoring of teaching, learning and well-being of the pupils. [Paragraph 34]
- 2.43 Effective and well-structured management of the boarding house ensures that pupils are safe and well cared for. Representatives of the governing body visit the boarding house weekly to ensure that the pupils' welfare is maintained. Appropriate links between academic and residential staff ensure that accurate records are up to date and policies and procedures are securely implemented. The demands on pupils in a choir school are high in terms of extra music rehearsal and performance, but well-qualified and committed staff ensure that pupils manage these extra expectations in an atmosphere of warmth and care. [NMS 13]

What are parents' views of the school?

Parents are asked to respond as 'agree' or 'disagree' with the option to specify 'no view' or not to answer individual questions. One hundred and two parents responded to part or all of the questionnaire. The table below shows the proportions of parents who responded 'agree' or 'disagree' in relation to each question, and the number who didn't offer a view.

	% Agree	% Disagree	Number offering no view
School questions			
1. My child is happy at the school.	100	0	1
2. My child is making good progress at the school.	98	1	3
3. My child feels safe at the school.	100	0	1
4. My child is well looked after at the school.	100	0	2
5. The school actively promotes good behaviour.	100	0	1
6. There is someone for my child to go to if problems arise in the school.	98	1	3
7. The school welcomes my views.	96	3	11
8. The school deals well with bullying.	97	2	29
9. Behaviour is well managed.	98	1	4
10. I receive good information about my child's progress, the school's policies and activities/events.	100	0	2
11. I receive timely responses to my questions, concerns and complaints.	100	0	3
12. My child has access to a broad curriculum.	98	1	1
13. My child's individual educational needs are being met at school.	100	0	7
14. I would recommend the school to another parent.	99	1	2
Boarding questions			
1. My child enjoys boarding.	90	9	80
2. The boarding accommodation is well maintained.	100	0	80
3. My child is well looked after if he/she is ill or injured.	100	0	81
4. I am able to contact my child easily.	90	9	80
5. I am able to contact boarding staff easily.	100	0	80
6. My child feels safe in the boarding house.	100	0	80
7. My child's belongings are kept safe.	100	0	80
8. Boarding staff treat my child fairly.	100	0	82
9. I am happy with the balance of free time and activities my child has in the evenings and at weekends.	81	18	80

3. SUMMARY OF REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

	All requirements met?
Part 1 Quality of education provided (curriculum)	Yes
Part 1 Quality of education provided (teaching)	Yes
Part 2 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Yes
Part 3 Welfare, health and safety of pupils, including Other legislation	Yes
Part 4 Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors	Yes
Part 5 Premises and accommodation	Yes
Part 6 Provision of information	Yes
Part 7 Manner in which complaints are handled	Yes
Part 8 Quality of leadership and management	Yes
National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools	Yes

Action points

3.1 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Progress since the previous inspection

3.2 The school now meets all the regulatory requirements for the safe recruitment of staff, including for gap students.