



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report
For Schools with Residential Provision**

Wells Cathedral School

April 2023

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School's Details

School	Wells Cathedral School		
DfE number	933/6029		
Registered charity number	310212		
Address	Wells Cathedral School 15 The Liberty Wells Somerset BA5 2ST		
Telephone number	01749 834200		
Email address	main-office@wells-cathedral-school.com		
Headmaster	Mr Alastair Tighe		
Chair of governors	Mr David Brown		
Proprietor	Wells Cathedral School Ltd		
Age range	2 to 19		
Number of pupils on roll	783		
	Day pupils	536	Boarders 247
	Pre-prep	96	Prep 117
	Seniors	376	Sixth Form 195
Inspection dates	25 to 27 April 2023		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Wells Cathedral School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils located in the centre of the city of Wells. The school is a charitable trust and limited company, and its governing body of ecclesiastical and lay members has proprietorial responsibility. The school was originally founded in 909 AD to educate choristers, and now offers places for talented young musicians including those who are eligible for funding under the Department for Education's music and dance scheme (MDS). Boarders are accommodated in one of nine houses situated on site.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, a new head of the preparatory school has been appointed, and a new boarding house established for Years 4 to 8.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to nurture a community where pupils are encouraged to discover themselves and then to be themselves to the very best of their abilities. It seeks to promote an atmosphere where work, study, activity and spirituality are harmoniously combined in a creative mix within a family environment. Based on Christian values, the school welcomes pupils of all faiths or of none, striving to inspire them to meet the challenges of the future with courage, enthusiasm, resilience, optimism and philanthropy.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, the majority of day pupils living the city of Wells itself, or from other local towns and villages. Boarders can board from Year 4, with about two-thirds from overseas. Data provided by the school show that the ability profile of the school is above average compared to others taking the same tests nationally. The number of pupils identified as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 178, of whom 83 receive additional support. Five pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 145 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 36 receive support. All pupils who are choristers or are on one of the specialised music or mathematics courses have a modified curriculum.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the prep school and the pre-prep, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the prep school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Boarders are supported to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff which are based on mutual trust and respect. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 13, 17 and 21 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 3, 5–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.13 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 19 and 22 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.14 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.15 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 4, 7 and 23 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.16 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.17 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.18 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.19 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.20 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.21 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 2 are met.**

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are excellent in all areas of the curriculum and develop strongly as they move through the school.
- Standards achieved in music are exceptional, and at least excellent in other creative arts.
- Pupils' strong study skills are seeded in the encouragement to explore and experiment from their earliest days in the pre-prep.
- Pupils collaborate naturally but benefit from the freedom to study in the way that suits them best.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils have excellent self-awareness and confidence, show strong empathy to others, and are enthusiastic to lead change.
- Pupils are awake to the spiritual aspects of life, reinforced by the musical, cathedral and city environment.
- Pupils value, respect and absorb the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, nationalities, attitudes and talents of others.
- Pupils lead much of the activity that shapes their outstanding contribution to the school, local and wider community.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- As and when appropriate, further develop opportunities for pupils to take the lead in discussions about change.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are excellent in all areas of the curriculum and develop strongly as they move through the school. In the Nursery and pre-prep, planning of activities shows intelligent awareness of children's individuality, and seizes on chances to write, speak and count. As a result, children develop high-level linguistic skills at an early age and are confident communicators both in the written and spoken word. They show an equally high standard of numeracy. The school's

Anglo-Saxon motto *beo þæt þu eart (be what you are)* reflects its 10th century roots and is articulated in the encouragement of Nursery and pre-prep children to choose activities; and in the customised curriculum followed by many senior school pupils. In this way pupils of all ages both build intellectual resilience and expand and deepen their skills in their chosen areas. Observation of pupils with SEND in lessons, of their written work and an analysis of data all confirm the strong development of the knowledge, skills and understanding of this group. They benefit from staff who are highly qualified, regularly trained and whose tailored support for individual pupils is reinforced by similar approaches in the main curriculum. Pupils with EAL make excellent progress, their understanding of technical language is enhanced by working closely, particularly in music and mathematics, with other pupils of similar talent and aspiration.

- 3.6 Pupils achieve well in external examinations. In the years 2019 to 2022, over half of GCSE examinations have been graded 9–7. In the years 2019 to 2022 over half of A-level examinations have been graded A* or A, and nearly four-fifths A* to B. An analysis of data shows that in both GCSE and A-level pupils achieve higher grades than expected for their ability. Historically results in *inter alia* music, mathematics and separate sciences are strong. The majority of EAL pupils make progress at least in line with others, and for a significant minority well in excess of that. Observations and discussions indicate that this excellence is achieved by ever-progressive building of expectations in lessons. SEND pupils make progress which on average is almost exactly in line with other pupils. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents said that boarding had enhanced their child's academic progress. For many pupils who follow the school's specialised programmes this strong academic record is in parallel to extremely high levels of attainment in music. Pupils enjoy success in team and individual sport. At all ages pupils have won county, regional and occasionally national competitions, buoyed by the school's encouragement to develop their innate talents and explore new opportunities.
- 3.7 In both the prep and senior schools, pupils develop a well-organised approach to experimental work in science, for example in preparing for GCSE practical physics examinations. They have a clear understanding of the scientific method, and record and analyse results accurately. Pupils with SEND are well supported by others in their group. Year 5 pupils quickly understood the concept of food chains and apex predators. Lower-sixth pupils show quick recall in physics, summarising orally the key points from a previous demonstration on the photoelectric effect. Teaching underpins the pupils' understanding by demanding exact definitions of terminology such as the work function or threshold frequency. It is characteristic of pupils' preparedness to widen their academic experience that many study geology to A level: an area in which they have won external awards. Pupils achieve well in the humanities. In Year 10 they demonstrated excellent knowledge of the concepts regarding adaptation to climate change.
- 3.8 Pupils of all ages have excellent creative skills, supported by the mantra of experiment and the encouragement to be themselves. The standard of art and photography produced by pupils is at least excellent, and at times exceptional. Pupils achieve high grades in art examinations at GCSE and A level, and a high proportion of candidates proceed to study Foundation courses at art college. Artwork on display reflects an even balance between observation and imagination. *Art of the week* shows excellent progression in the skills of pupils as they move through the prep and senior school. For example, Year 7 refine their application of tunnel shading techniques, including crosshatching, contour shading, carefully blending and layering the variations they have observed. Boarders from overseas with no previous art experience develop from basic techniques a mastery of brushwork. Sixth-form pupils have inventively combined collage, photography and pen to explore the abstract use of line, shape and colour to create a project based on the distortion of the human face.
- 3.9 The extremely high levels of musical performance achieved by a significant number of pupils recognises the substantial and successful use of government funding (MDS) and governors' support of these pupils and the wider community. The standard of choral singing merits the school's description of its choir as "world class". In academic music lessons, Year 11 pupils were confident in their use of the tonality and harmony, and sixth-form pupils comfortable in identifying Neapolitan VI

chords, anticipatory notes and harmonic sequences. The standard of playing and singing is exceptional for a school. There is a strong representation in the National Youth Orchestra and Choir. Musical pupils are encouraged to challenge themselves with the new: for example, the concerto competition included music by Szymanowski, Wieniawski and Grohndahl. Results in the graded examinations for the Associated Board and Trinity College are outstanding with the majority of pupils obtaining distinctions or merits. Pupils regularly achieve diploma level on their instruments, sometimes being at licentiate level, the equivalent to the end of the second year at music conservatoire. Boarders in particular spoke positively of the time and facilities they had available for the demanding practice schedules.

- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate a high level of numeracy, and they are able to apply their knowledge easily and effectively in areas of the curriculum. Nursery children show a strong command of number for their age, for example, counting petals in their home-made fairy potion. In the pre-prep and prep, pupils benefit from well-pitched activities that enable them to make excellent progress. In Year 6 more able pupils identified creative methods to directly solve time and date problems in comparison to others who as accurately but more methodically completed detailed calculations. Teaching reinforced the validity of both approaches, and as a result pupils gained further confidence in their handling of number. SEND pupils were allowed time to talk through their own calculations. Senior school pupils make excellent progress, especially those who are part of the specialist accelerated mathematics group. These pupils successfully study topics well beyond those expected for their age. In lessons pupils with EAL make fast progress, and one-to-one they engage tenaciously with teachers, for example in the application of the central theorem to a further mathematics statistic problem. Examination results are strong, and pupils have an excellent and sustained record in mathematical Olympiads and other competitions.
- 3.11 Pupils have extraordinarily strong communication skills through their speaking, listening and their music. The most able write fluently and maturely in English and modern foreign languages. Children in the EYFS develop language quickly because planning seizes every opportunity to develop children's understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds, and from an early age they construct simple sentences. Progress made in grammar, spelling and creative writing in the prep school has historically been less rapid than in other areas but has been targeted and significant improvements have been made before further acceleration from Year 7. There are outliers to this, for example zero-English speakers are supported well and quickly become articulate in the language. In discussion, pupils spoke with astute use of vocabulary with measure and their contributions were appropriate and respected by others.
- 3.12 Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) devices effectively in lessons, often for looking up information. From the earliest age use of ICT is embedded in teaching and learning, in for example music technology or computing science. In lessons with little fuss or attention pupils make choices about using ICT or not. The school's leadership has addressed previous concerns about the quality of marking and assessment by increasing the use of digital feedback. Evidence seen shows that this has enhanced the level of individual dialogue about pupils' work. In the questionnaire the vast majority of pupils said that teachers were supportive and that the marking and assessment helped them improve their work.
- 3.13 The extent to which the pupils study skills are developed is excellent. Pupils in the pre-prep are given ample opportunity to analyse a range of sources to hypothesise, particularly in communication and literacy-based activities. Year 2 children were able to suggest what had happened to a skeleton which had broken apart, set by their teacher in an engaging scene outdoors. These skills develop through the prep-school curriculum, such as in science in the investigation of the comparative strengths of tubes with triangular, circular and square cross sections. By the time pupils reach the sixth form such skills are advanced. In 2022 almost all pupils achieved A* or A in the extended project qualification (EPQ), mirroring previous results. In a religion, philosophy and ethics (RPE) lesson, sixth-form pupils demonstrated an excellent ability to apply ethical thinking to synthesise ideas about perspectives on

interfaith dialogue. Some demonstrated a strong understanding of the impact of cognitive and non-cognitive language on understanding of the area, triggered by teaching that questioned the influence of a post-enlightenment mindset within a lesson on pluralism and society. The school's specialist musicians achieve at very high levels largely because they can analyse their own techniques and synthesise contributions from others in the orchestras.

- 3.14 The high levels of independence, leadership and collaboration observed across the pre-prep and prep is evidence that a culture of determination and support for each other is deeply embedded. Pupils demonstrate an excellent attitude to their learning in all areas. They maintain a very high level of focus in lessons. Lessons observed were characterised by good humour and enthusiasm from both pupils and teachers, cloaked in respect, a meld that supports the excellent progress seen. Pupils' default approach to work, sport and music is to collaborate. They move seamlessly between an individual to a collaborative approach and, in line with the school's motto, in the way that suits them best. For example, in further mathematics, EAL pupils enjoyed the rapid pace of a lesson and clarity of explanation but did not readily openly contribute answers to teachers' questions. Teaching respected that their fast progress is rooted in a preference to trust in subject teachers' knowledge rather than their own exploration. Pupils excellent, and at times exceptional, attitudes to learning are founded on the clarity of knowledge that pupils have about themselves as learners. Almost all gain places at their first-choice senior schools, universities, art colleges or music conservatoires, and they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.16 Pupils have excellent self-awareness and confidence, evident from general conversations in school, from formal pupil discussions and observations in lessons. In the questionnaire, the very large majority of parents said that the boarding experience has supported their child's personal development and progress. Pupils have an excellent and mature perspective, calmness and at times serenity. They meet their success and achievement with humility and enjoy the success of others. Moving about the site they are purposeful and handle self-imposed high expectations with balance. Pupils are unafraid to make and learn from mistakes, an approach which is developed through their time in the pre-prep and prep school. They are encouraged to reflect on their work and stay determined: pre-prep children worked with focus on their literacy to achieve a 'challenge stamp'. The thirst to improve pupils' own learning is highlighted in music and sport, but prevalent elsewhere. They show great confidence in performing at a high level in front of any audience, for example in music and drama. All are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- 3.17 Pupils' excellent decision-making skills are rooted in the freedom of choice they are encouraged to use in the EYFS. Within the confines of safety, children make decisions about which apparatus to climb, and whom to play with, for example on 'Welly Wednesday'. They subconsciously assess and are prepared to take risks. In the prep and senior school pupils are allowed to work in their preferred way, for example in using or not ICT, or to work individually or in groups. This self-determination underpins their ability to make bigger decisions. Year 8 pupils said they felt well informed and able to decide on their choice of academic subjects, the ability to substitute some GCSE options for additional music practice, or their choice of co-curricular activities. High-performing musicians have made determined life choices and devote a high proportion of their time to practice and preparation. Behaviour logs suggest the vast majority of pupils make the right choices in their lifestyles and learn from mistakes made. In the questionnaire a small minority of pupils felt that they were not listened to. Evidence suggests that there are a plethora of conduits in the prep and senior schools and in boarding houses in which individual issues could be raised, but that some older pupils sought to take leadership in discussing more general issues. In questionnaire responses that were overwhelmingly positive, almost all parents said that the school was well led and governed. The cohesive self-critical ethos the leadership engenders would sit comfortably with the suggestion.

- 3.18 Pupils have a strong spiritual awareness. Whether or not they ascribe to the Christian ethos of the school, they are appreciative of the role of calm, stillness and reflection that is part of their school life. They have sophisticated cognizance of the material, the non-material and the nature of identity especially in relation to faith and religion. Pupils identified this as especially prevalent in listening to each other's music, looking at art, or being educated amongst the beautiful architecture of the city. Choristers understood that, when singing the *Te Deum*, they were praising God, and delivering the worship on behalf of the cathedral congregation. In a Year 4 art lesson pupils created sculptures in the style of Gormley's *Doubt*, currently in the cathedral, and in that context maturely discussed their view of faith and uncertainty. Younger pupils were awestricken looking at the bone structure of 3000-year-old Egyptian mummies. In learning about an irrigation project in Nepal, senior school pupils correctly surmised that the shape of ice stupas had a religious significance.
- 3.19 Pupils' moral awareness is excellent. Discussion with prep-school pupils shows they have a clear sense of right and wrong. In a lesson analysing 19th century child labour, Year 6 pupils quickly moved from the narrative to moral judgement. Senior school pupils listen well and share ideas freely and appropriately. They can deal with complex and difficult moral issues sensitively ensuring that any views expressed are supported with appropriate evidence. Within a lesson on adaptations of UK to climate change, Year 10 pupils show their understanding of the large-scale issue of climate change on the national agricultural adaptations. Pupils are supportive of the school's new approach to behaviour management, and in the questionnaire almost all said that the school expects them to behave well. A small minority said that pupils are not kind or respect each other. This can be traced to an anachronistic use of inappropriate language. In discussion pupils suggested that most of it was unthinking, and that the overwhelming majority were more respectful.
- 3.20 Collaboration is the instinctive approach across all areas of school life. The collaborative nature of the pupils' musical endeavours is outstanding. Pupils involved in both the cathedral choir and symphony orchestra demonstrate the effectiveness of a wide age range working harmoniously with each other towards a common aim. The school's geography ensures older and younger pupils see much of each other during the day, and together with cross age group work in music and in boarding houses underpins the high levels of cohesion. Older pupils successfully adopt mentoring and tutoring roles for younger pupils. From children's first weeks in the Nursery, levels of social development and collaboration are excellent. The use of talk-partners formally supports what comes naturally. For example, Year 2 children identifying synonyms for "dark" listened to each other with respect, patience, and absorbed others' ideas, hence making more progress than that likely to have been achieved individually. Many of the achievements in the prep school, particularly in sport, are founded on strong teamwork, and an informed knowledge and acceptance of each other's strengths. In lessons, senior school pupils work easily and effectively with each other without any sense of fuss or direction from teachers. The fluidity of groupings, observed for example in science, allows the sharing of ideas and supports the less confident. More able pupils often drive the progress of others. In a drama lesson small groups devised pieces in a way that drew quieter pupils to participate. Pupils see themselves as part of wider communities, and for example choristers spoke of the "togetherness of achievement" recognising that high-level performances came only from the contribution of each individual. In the questionnaire, the very large majority of parents said the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.21 Pupils embrace a culture of generosity with their time and their talents. The extent and depth of their activity and contribution to the school, local and wider community is exceptional. Choristers follow and enjoy a demanding schedule that is the flagship of the partnership between cathedral and school, and other musicians regularly perform in cathedral concerts. Senior pupils within the school devise programmes of music that can be delivered to younger pupils of the school, and to the community beyond. In discussion pupils reported they valued the school, sharing its facilities with primary schools and Ukrainian families, but beyond those almost all other activities are initiated and organised by pupils themselves. Pupils have organised hockey workshops, mathematical conferences, and undertaken a plethora of fundraising events for local and national charities. Despite their full school

timetables, they regularly volunteer for example in homes for the elderly or litter-picking in the city. The annual *Event on the Lawn*, a version of the festival at nearby Glastonbury, annually raises large funds for a long-standing partner school in Sierra Leone.

- 3.22 In their approaches and attitudes pupils articulate the school motto “be who you are” and its evolution to “become the best you can be”. The school has a culture where all are respected and valued for who they are. Wells Cathedral School is an excellent example where a wide range of individuals: extremely gifted musicians, mathematicians, sports players, boarding and day pupils and the neurodiverse interact with respect, sensitivity and tolerance. In the questionnaire, almost all parents stated that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. The low profile of groups such as EDI or LGBTQ+ is a reflection of the high levels of acceptance and understanding in the school community.
- 3.23 From an early age pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy. The well-resourced pre-prep outdoor areas, together with a near-by off-site woodland environment, allows pre-prep children to learn to take risks within agreed boundaries: absorbed skills which later surface in senior pupils’ participation in for example the CCF and Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme. Pupils show good awareness of the risk associated with a diverse city site. They enjoy exercise and are aware of what constitutes a healthy diet. In the questionnaire a minority of boarders expressed concerns about the food, a provision that the school monitors closely through an active pupil food committee. Pupils understand the dangers posed by the internet and social media. They can identify what they need to do to maintain their mental health so that they can learn effectively. The governors have continued to strengthen support in this area. Pupils demonstrate that they know how to stay safe and where they can turn for help. Their understanding is supported by a strong and well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum that revisits topics in age-appropriate ways with a strong pastoral focus. In particular pupils with onerous demands made of them by their commitments are well supported.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended tutor meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Cole	Reporting inspector
Mr Steven Winter	Compliance team inspector (Head, SofH school)
Ms Julia Bowden	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr David Brown	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mr Will Williams	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Andrew Selkirk	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, SofH school)
Mr Stephen Yeo	Team inspector for boarding (Former head, HMC school)