



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Report for a Material Change  
and Progress Monitoring Visit**

**Wells Cathedral School**

**November 2019**



## School's details

<b>School</b>	Wells Cathedral School			
<b>DfE number</b>	933/6029			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	310212			
<b>Address</b>	Wells Cathedral School 15 The Liberty Wells Somerset BA5 2ST			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01749 834200			
<b>Email address</b>	main-office@wells.cathedral.school			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Alastair Tighe			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	The Very Revd. Dr John Davies			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	732			
	<b>Boys</b>	362	<b>Girls</b>	370
	<b>Day pupils</b>	448	<b>Boarders</b>	284
	<b>EYFS</b>	50	<b>Juniors</b>	115
	<b>Seniors</b>	363	<b>Sixth Form</b>	204
<b>Date of visit</b>	27 November 2019			

## 1. Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Wells Cathedral School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between three and eighteen years, originally founded in 909 AD to educate choristers. The school is located in the centre of the city of Wells. It is a charitable trust and limited company and its governing body of ecclesiastical and lay members has proprietorial responsibility. The school offers places for talented young musicians who are eligible for funding under the Department for Education's music and dance scheme. Boarders are accommodated in one of nine houses situated on site. The school has 169 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom one has an education, health and care plan. There are 166 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in September 2018.

### Purpose of the visit

- 1.2 This was an announced material change visit at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's retrospective proposal to increase pupil numbers from 672 to 800. This inspection also served as a progress monitoring visit to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the compliance inspection of 19 to 20 September 2018.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8 (safeguarding); NMS 2, 8, 9, 11, and 16	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 6	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire); NMS 7	Met
Part 3, paragraph 13 (first aid); NMS 3	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision); NMS 15	Met
Part 3, paragraph 15 (admission register)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 6	Met
Part 4 paragraphs 18 to 20 (Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 14	Met
Part 4 paragraph 21 (single central register of appointments); NMS 14	Met
Part 5 Premises and accommodation	Met
Part 6 paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 18	Met
Part 8 paragraph 34 (Quality of leadership in and management of schools); NMS 13	Met

## 2. Inspection findings

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 2, 8, 9, 11 and 16]

#### Safeguarding policy

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

#### Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standards.
- 2.4 Safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively to ensure the welfare of pupils, including the children in the EYFS and those with SEND. It has appropriate regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding receive training at the appropriate level, including working with other safeguarding agencies. All other staff receive regular training in safeguarding and their responsibility in promoting the welfare of pupils, both those at risk and those in need, in line with the requirements of the local safeguarding children board, and this includes training in promoting the pupils' online safety and the prevention of extremism. Additionally, discussions with pupils confirmed that the school listens to children and acts on their concerns. Staff new to the school receive appropriate induction training, including those staff who start work at times other than the start of term. All staff are required to read *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Part 1 and Annex A*; their understanding of what they have read is checked via discussions, led by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). Training records confirm the training undertaken by staff and that they have read *KCSIE Part 1 and Annex A* and this is logged in individual staff files.
- 2.5 The school liaises closely with the local safeguarding board and knows to follow the advice they receive. Records are kept of child protection concerns and stored appropriately. Should concerns or allegations arise, the school is quick to seek advice from the local safeguarding children board and, when necessary, make a referral. The school is aware of the need to liaise appropriately with parents about safeguarding concerns that arise but also ensures that parental wishes do not override the best interests of the child's welfare.
- 2.6 Staff are clear as to the actions they should take should they have concerns about a child, including mental health concerns, or be in receipt of an allegation of abuse or should they have concerns or hear an allegation about a member of staff. Additionally, there is neutral notification program that allows staff to report anything of concern or even self-report. They know where to find further guidance should they need it. They know that anyone can make a referral to the local safeguarding children board or, in the case of a child being in immediate danger, to the police, and say they are confident to do so should the need arise.
- 2.7 Staff have a clear understanding of the school's staff code of conduct, including the use of mobile phones, guidance on taking images of children involved in school activities, and their use of social media. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe on the internet. Filters protect pupils from accessing unsuitable websites and appropriate arrangements made to monitor the use of the electronic devices used by the pupils. The school's safeguarding arrangements are overseen appropriately by the governors. The designated governor for safeguarding meets regularly with the DSL to review arrangements and any child protection concerns. In addition, together they carry out an annual review of the school's safeguarding policy in the form of an audit which, in turn, is reviewed

by the full governing body. The current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 6]**

2.8 The school meets the standards.

2.9 The school has a suitably structured health and safety organisation, headed by a senior manager as health and safety officer. The school health and safety committee include all areas of operation of the school including EYFS, the junior and the senior schools. All staff have health and safety induction training, with regular termly updates. All injuries, no matter how minor, are recorded using an accident report form, with those requiring medical attention being referred to the medical centre. Staff use an electronic monitoring system to manage trips and visits; these require sign off by a senior member of staff. Overseas trips are monitored by senior staff with the appropriate parental permissions and risk assessment in place. Security arrangements are appropriate, including visitor passes, restricted access to buildings and appropriate use of CCTV monitoring systems. Vehicle movements on site are controlled so far as reasonably practical given the nature of the school site. The health and safety committee meets on a termly basis and staff are invited to raise issues of concern for consideration by the full board of governors. Site tours and discussions with school leaders confirmed that the current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; NMS 7]**

2.10 The school meets the standards.

2.11 The school meets the compliance requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by ensuring that the fire safety policy and all fire risk assessments are reviewed appropriately. Fire evacuation procedures are regularly rehearsed by staff and pupils, at least on a termly basis, with a report being made to the health and safety committee. Boarding pupils in discussion confirmed that they have fire practices in boarding time. An external audit ensures that the school effectively manages fire prevention arrangements. Scrutiny of records of fire risk assessments, fire evacuation procedures and logs of the maintenance of alarms, detectors and servicing arrangements confirm that fire safety is suitably promoted. During site tours and in discussions with the school leaders there was no indication that the proposed increase in pupil numbers would have an adverse impact on fire safety arrangements.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – first aid [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 13; NMS 3]**

2.12 The school meets the standards.

2.13 The school's first aid policy contains suitable arrangements which are implemented effectively to ensure that its pupils have appropriate access to first aid when it is required through injury or illness. The policy details the arrangements for those with medical needs, the procedures for recording accidents and guidance on when to call an ambulance when required. School staff are trained appropriately as basic first aiders, first aid officers and a number of staff are sports first aid trained. Nursing staff are available at the school's medical centre during the day and are on call overnight to meet the needs of the boarding pupils. There are medical kits available for use at strategic points throughout the school site and medical kits are made available for sports fixtures and trips away from the school premises. Boarding pupils have access to local medical, dental and optician practices by appointment. The school has a mental health and emotional well-being programme which engages in a range of activities including group discussions, debate, role play and reflection to assist pupils with

emotional needs. Two therapy dogs are also used to provide comfort and assurance to pupils when required. The school accesses professional mental health services and support when required and pupils have the facility to make direct contact with a counselling service based in the medical centre. There is no reason that the proposed increase in pupil numbers will affect suitable first aid provision.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 15]**

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 Appropriate arrangements ensure that pupils are suitably supervised and individual needs, such as for those with SEND, taken into account. In the junior school and EYFS, staff to pupil ratios are appropriate and extra staffing has been already been put into place to accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Guidance for staff involved in supervision duties is detailed and risk assessments are used to ensure that supervision levels are always appropriate. At all times pupils are supervised by qualified and experienced staff who know and understand their needs. Where prefects or senior pupils assist with younger pupils, the school ensures that they are directed and supervised in their duties. Appropriate staff supervision is in place for boarders. The current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission register [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]**

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that an admissions register is correctly maintained. Scrutiny of the register confirmed that for each pupil the register contains all required elements. The omissions identified in the previous inspection report in terms of recording the name of the destination school notified by a parent and the first date of attendance, where reasonably practicable, have been rectified.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 6]**

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.
- 2.19 An efficient and effective approach is taken to managing risk to ensure the welfare of all pupils, including children in the EYFS. An appropriate risk assessment policy is in place and staff have all received training in assessing risk for their respective areas and for organising school outings. Scrutiny of risk assessment documents show that appropriate evaluations are undertaken across all age groups, which include consideration towards the needs of vulnerable pupils. All risk assessments are reviewed and signed off by senior leaders. Governance, through the health and safety committee, provides suitable oversight of the arrangements. The current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 14]**

- 2.20 The school meets the standards.
- 2.21 The school ensures that it carries out the appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff and supply staff prior to a person beginning work in the school. These include checks of the person's identity, right to work in the UK and overseas checks, where applicable. In addition, appropriate teaching and management prohibition checks are carried out, if required and all staff complete a medical self-declaration form. Supply staff recruited through an agency undergo the appropriate agency checks, which are verified by the school and in addition are required to produce an enhanced

criminal record certificate and confirm their identity before they commence employment at the school. The current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

### **Premises and accommodation – toilets and changing accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23; NMS 5]**

2.22 The school meets the standards.

2.23 Tours of the school's accommodation confirmed that adequate toilet, washing and changing facilities are available to all pupils in the senior, junior and EYFS sections of the school. Separate toilet facilities are provided for pupils beyond EYFS and suitable changing and showering facilities are provided for all pupils who take part in physical education in both the junior and senior schools. Separate facilities are available for disabled pupils, staff and visitors to the school. All the above facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

### **Premises and accommodation – medical facilities [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 24]**

2.24 The school meets the standard.

2.25 A suitable medical centre, staffed by qualified nurses is available during the working day for; EYFS, junior and senior school pupils. Separate toilet and wash hand basin facilities are available for pupils' use. Pupils medical notes and reports are confidentially secured as are any medicines which are kept in locked cupboards in the medical centre. All the above facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

### **Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25; NMS 5]**

2.26 The school meets the standards.

2.27 Tours of the school visiting both day and boarding provision indicated that maintenance regimes are of an appropriate standard, suitably managed and documented. The school uses an on-line system for reporting maintenance requirements which prioritises responses in terms of the health and safety priority of the item logged. Governors provide suitable oversight and management of maintenance and refurbishment and additional input is provided by members of the health and safety committee. There is no reason that the proposed increase in numbers will affect these arrangements.

### **Premises and accommodation – acoustics, lighting and water supply [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 26, 27 and 28; NMS 5]**

2.28 The school meets the standards.

2.29 Tours of the school's accommodation confirmed that suitable acoustic and lighting arrangements, and water supplies are in place throughout the school. Adequate sound insulation is provided where required such as in music practice rooms and where machinery is being used in design technology laboratories. Boarding houses have adequate glazing to reduce noise from road traffic. Internal and external lighting is adequate for the needs of the pupils and staff, including external lighting for security purposes and to allow boarders to move safely across the school site after dark. Suitable water supplies are available across all areas of the school with hot and cold water as required, including ready access to drinking water. This supports the facility for boarders to prepare food and drinks in their kitchenettes. The current facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

**Premises and accommodation – outdoor space and boarding accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 29 and 30; NMS 5]**

- 2.30 The school meets the standards.
- 2.31 All age groups in the school site have direct access to suitable and appropriate spaces for physical education and recreation. All have access to a sports hall and swimming pool and there is also direct access to a large grassed sports field. Boarding houses have access to house gardens of varying sizes, and all have adequate common rooms. There is also an artificial basketball pitch that can be used for various sports and a number of outdoor table tennis areas are provided. Mixing between the different age groups is encouraged to facilitate overall integration of the school community, however there is appropriate separation of age groups when it is required. Boarding accommodation is suitable for the proposed numbers, and maintained to a standard such that the health, safety and welfare of the pupils is ensured as far as is reasonably practicable. The school's leadership has planned so that physical education and recreational play space will be sufficient to meet the needs of the increasing pupil population.

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

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

**Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 18]**

- 2.33 The school meets the standards.
- 2.34 Parental complaints are managed effectively through a three-stage process, informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school. The school has rectified the failings from the previous inspection to ensure that it adheres to clear time-scales for the management of a complaint; keeps appropriate records; and identifies any actions taken, whether or not a complaint is successful and whether any complaints relate to the boarding provision. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidentially being released only to authorised bodies on request.

**Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13]**

- 2.35 The school meets the standards.
- 2.36 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards and requirements are met consistently. The failings from the previous inspection have been rectified. The inspection visit confirmed that since the previous inspection the governing board and management of the school have implemented further measures such as compliance monitoring systems aimed to ensure that standards and requirements continue to be met in the future. They ensure appropriate leadership and management of boarding so that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored. The enhanced focus and monitoring of the school's management therefore supports the proposed increase in pupil numbers to a maximum of 800 pupils.



### **3. Regulatory action points**

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this visit, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and no further action is required as a result of this visit.

## **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The senior leadership and governing board have strategically managed a pupil roll of well over 700 pupils for at least ten years, to its present total of 762. Facilities and provision during the visit were found to be appropriate for a maximum number of 800 pupils. It is therefore recommended that approval be given to allow the school to increase to the requested maximum number of 800 pupils.

## **5. Summary of evidence**

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