



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE CHORISTER SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

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The Chorister School

Full Name of School	The Chorister School		
DfE Number	840/6001		
EYFS Number	EY372739		
Registered Charity Number	527376		
Address	The Chorister School The College Durham County Durham DH1 3EL		
Telephone Number	0191 3842935		
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Email Address	head.teacher@thechoristerschool.com		
Interim Head	Mrs Linda J Lawrence		
Chair of Governors	The Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove, Dean of Durham		
Age Range	3 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	215		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (135 boys; 80 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	33	11-13: 47
	5-11:	135	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	173	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 8
Number of Boarders	Total:	42	
	Full:	42	Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Alison Burrell		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	08 Feb 2011 to 09 Feb 2011 09 Mar 2011 to 11 Mar 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain 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 evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in October 2009 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Records of The Chorister School, situated within the cathedral precinct in the historic city of Durham, go back to at least 1416. Founded to educate the choristers who sing the daily services in the cathedral, the school is an integral part of the cathedral foundation, the Dean being its chair of governors. Maintaining the music of the cathedral remains its primary function. The school now provides both a boys' and a girls' choir, all of whom are full boarders, though they are a minority of the school population. The school's governing body is, ex officio, the cathedral chapter, augmented by non-voting advisors appointed to bring specific expertise to the school. Its finances are consolidated with those of the cathedral, with whom it shares its charitable status. A number of committees have representatives from both the school and the cathedral.
- 1.2 The school admitted its first non-chorister pupils in 1948 and its first girls in 1994, having opened a pre-preparatory department in 1992. Since the last inspection a nursery has been added and girls accepted as full choristers. At the time of the inspection an interim head was in post, due to the previous head's sick leave followed by his resignation, with a new head appointed to start in April 2011.
- 1.3 The school caters for 215 pupils between the ages of three and thirteen, of whom around three-fifths are boys and forty-two are boarders, the large majority of these being choristers. Thirty-three pupils attend the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), of whom twenty-two are boys. The majority of pupils progress at the age of thirteen to a local independent senior school, though pupils have transferred to around thirty destinations in the last ten years. Most pupils come from white British backgrounds with a small number of other cultures and nationalities represented, notably European and Asian. One pupil has English as an additional language (EAL) and receives additional support. The school has identified twenty-nine pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom nine receive specialist learning support from the school. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). Results of standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the school is slightly above the national average with four-fifths of pupils having an ability that is average or higher.
- 1.4 The school aims to be a centre of excellence across the curriculum with a particular speciality in music, whilst providing a broad, participative and balanced curriculum, which enables pupils to reach their true potential. It seeks to promote a strong Christian ethos, drawing inspiration from its relationship with the cathedral, encouraging citizenship, self-discipline and respect and taking a sensitive approach to pastoral care.

- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Purple	Reception

Preparatory School

School	NC name
Silver	Year 1
Gold	Year 2
1	Year 3
2	Year 4
3	Year 5
4	Year 6
5	Year 7
6	Year 8

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils reach excellent levels of achievement throughout the school and receive a well-rounded education. High levels of knowledge, understanding and skill across the curriculum stand pupils in good stead for their next stage of education. Pupils engage in an excellent range of extra-curricular pursuits and their attitude to learning is outstanding. Choristers make an excellent contribution to the musical life of both the school and the cathedral. A rigorous and broad curriculum includes outstanding cross-curricular and personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) elements. Library facilities have been much improved since the previous inspection. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their work. Teaching is good overall. Though some teaching is only satisfactory, often it is outstanding, taking excellent account of pupils' differing needs and enabling them to make rapid progress. Co-operative and independent learning skills are strongly fostered. Marking, assessment and target setting help pupils to understand how they can improve.
- 2.2 Pupils demonstrate excellent personal development. They are self-confident, considerate and respectful. They have good manners, a clear sense of right and wrong and show consideration for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils develop excellent cultural awareness both of their own culture and that of others. Provision for welfare, health and safety are excellent. A deep sense of care permeates the school. Relationships are very strong. Measures to promote good behaviour, guard against bullying and safeguard pupils are excellent. Provision for pupils who are ill or injured is robust. The school provides excellent support for pupils who have LDD and strongly promotes healthy eating and exercise. The quality of boarding is excellent, strongly supporting the choristers' contribution to the musical life of the cathedral. Pupils enjoy boarding; the deeply caring approach of the staff ensures a warm, comforting, homely atmosphere.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is excellent. Governors have a detailed oversight of school life, having wisely recruited lay advisors to ensure significant breadth of expertise and experience. Governors monitor the work of the school thoroughly and provide stimulating support and challenge. Leadership and management are outstanding. The clear sense of teamwork throughout the school results in staff knowing and taking to heart their roles and responsibilities. The leadership team are committed to constant self-evaluation and development. The role of heads of department has strengthened since the previous inspection. Monitoring and evaluation of departments is often outstanding, though this is not yet reflected across the whole curriculum. The school's links with its parents are excellent. Responses to the questionnaire, issued prior to the inspection, demonstrate that parents are very pleased with the education and support provided. There were no significant areas of concern. The school communicates well with parents, who receive useful information on their children's effort and progress. The school handles any concerns from parents thoroughly and with sensitivity and care.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 In order to develop further the strength of its provision, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Extend the excellent practices, seen in some departments, of monitoring, evaluation and peer review to ensure excellence across the whole curriculum.
 2. In the EYFS, improve integration between the Nursery and Reception children and enable staff to meet together regularly as an Early Years team.
 3. In the EYFS, further develop a consistent system to track children's progress throughout the Early Years.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is excellent throughout the school. They experience a well-rounded education, reflecting the school's aim to be a centre of excellence across the curriculum and continuing the high levels of attainment witnessed at the previous inspection.
- 3.2 Pupils achieve high levels of knowledge, understanding and skill across the range of subjects. They demonstrate well-developed skills in independent and logical thinking. The scholarship group achieve exceptional standards, for example, when discussing a Shakespearean text with great maturity. The school equally values and celebrates those pupils who achieve great success in overcoming specific learning difficulties. These pupils make outstanding progress and often catch up with the levels of their peers. Achievement in numeracy is high, as seen in pupils' success in IGCSE mathematics, and achievement in literacy is strong at all ages.
- 3.3 Achievement in extra-curricular pursuits is excellent and links to many facets of school life. The enriching music ensembles enable a significant number of pupils to develop their cultural experience, playing together very proficiently. The high quality of pupils' artwork in a variety of media and styles further illustrates high levels of creative achievement; members of the art club, for example, created particularly imaginative animated movies using stop-motion techniques.
- 3.4 Pupils' sporting achievement is similarly excellent; teams and individuals regularly achieve regional and national success and recognition. The vast majority of pupils have represented not only their house but also the school in matches and competitions. In addition to the main games, pupils enjoy success in a wide range of other sports, including a very popular karate club, fencing and rowing. The achievement of the choristers in the quality of their singing and the contribution this makes, in turn, to the musical and liturgical life of the cathedral is excellent and the recent addition of the girl choristers has been highly successful.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot generally be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be far above national age-related expectations. However, the achievement of those pupils entered for IGCSE mathematics, both from within the scholarship class and amongst those who opt to join the extra-curricular mathematics club, is outstanding in their achievement of levels of success expected of pupils three years older. A rigorous and broad curriculum enables pupils to proceed to senior schools of their first choice, both locally and nationally, many of which have extremely rigorous entrance criteria. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement and includes consideration of the levels at which pupils are working in relation to national age-related expectations.
- 3.6 Attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils co-operate extremely well in pair and group tasks. They demonstrated excellent individual research skills in a science lesson on renewable energy. They enjoy their learning and are proud of what they achieve; they show strong motivation and perseverance and, in their written work, take great care to ensure that their presentation is neat. Pupils clearly develop the capacity to be independent learners and to organise their work and time effectively.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.7 The quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is excellent and has developed significantly since the previous inspection. The school meets its aim to provide a balanced curriculum, which is further enhanced by a high level of cross-curricular integration. It has comprehensively responded to the requirement from the previous inspection to draw up a curriculum policy and to provide proper planning for and delivery of PSHCE. The school has developed these initiatives well beyond the statutory requirements. It provides an outstanding programme in PSHCE, underpinned by detailed documentation, demonstrating how the subject permeates, and is supported by, the academic curriculum, assemblies and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.8 The previous inspection also recommended that the school review the curriculum to ensure that it is balanced and allows pupils to meet their potential in all subjects. This has been achieved and an ongoing programme of review and refinement has led, for example, to an increase in time allocated to religious education (RE) in Year 3. The curriculum is excellent for all ages and abilities throughout the school and includes detailed provision to take account of pupils' differing needs. Provision for pupils with LDD and those with a statement of special educational needs is excellent. Curriculum subjects now have detailed planning documents. The school has made good progress in monitoring both the expectations of learning and the quality of the curriculum within each subject as pupils move through the school.
- 3.9 The curriculum provides well for pupils to undertake research using ICT, an area highlighted for improvement at the previous inspection. Pupils acquire these skills both within timetabled ICT lessons and in many other subject areas. In a science lesson, for example, pupils were guided to research using the internet through a portal specifically designed by the teacher. In a Year 2 art class, pupils used computer-based drawing software to recreate a painting by Monet and, in an art club, Year 5 pupils manipulated an animation programme without the need for guidance by the teacher.
- 3.10 A library has been created, following a recommendation from the previous inspection; a staff and pupil team successfully encourages pupils to read fiction and to write reviews of books they have enjoyed. A further recommendation was to enhance the outdoor play area for the youngest pupils and this has been successfully achieved.
- 3.11 A well-considered and carefully planned programme provides for the most able pupils to be accelerated by a year, following the analysis of standardised data and a constructive dialogue with parents. Great care is taken to preserve existing peer relationships, for example, through sport; the pupils clearly benefit from the increased challenge of working at a higher academic level. They then follow a distinct course in Year 8 as a separate class, which challenges them even further, not only in preparation for scholarship examinations but beyond through, for example, the introduction of new areas of study, such as German.
- 3.12 Pupils engage enthusiastically in a wide range of extra-curricular pursuits which significantly enhance their experience; during the inspection, a rehearsal of the Galilee Choir and a meeting of the World Challenge club stimulated outstanding levels of teamwork. Choristers derive great benefit and enjoyment from the outreach music workshops they undertake with local schools as part of a national singing

strategy. Links with the cathedral community are strong; the school makes regular use of the building as an invaluable curricular resource. A music class, for example, learnt about the organ through listening to it from the choir stalls and visiting the organ loft.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The overall quality of teaching is good. The majority is at least good; though some teaching is satisfactory, a significant proportion is outstanding, building on the good work noted at the previous inspection and meeting the school's aim of academic excellence. The best teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge, underpinned by a detailed understanding of the pupils' needs, high expectations of behaviour and application, and the provision of a varied range of activities to sustain pupils' motivation. Detailed lesson planning and a brisk pace ensure that pupils undertake a good volume of work. In the minority of lessons where the teaching was only satisfactory, it was characterised by less well-focused planning and less clear explanation of and direction towards the lesson objectives.
- 3.14 Teaching strongly encourages independence; in many lessons pupils were prompted to answer their own questions with only a little guidance rather than receive a verbatim answer. In a registration period, young prep department pupils were expected to say whether they had a music lesson or a club that day, and when they were to be collected, ensuring that they develop this aspect of being an independent learner. On many occasions, teaching fostered successful co-operative learning through the provision of thoughtfully prepared and managed pair work.
- 3.15 Teaching demonstrates a wide variety of styles and focuses strongly on the best approaches to engage and enthuse the pupils. As a result, their motivation is sustained and an atmosphere of determined application prevails. Teaching draws well on a broad range of methods and good use of resources, including the appropriate use of interactive whiteboards in a selection of classrooms. Teaching also ensures confident use of the boards by the pupils. Activities are thoughtfully planned to suit a range of learning styles; in a Year 4 English lesson, for example, an understanding of rhyming couplets was effected through sequencing one-line strips of a poem and sticking them to a sheet.
- 3.16 Teaching is very alert to the individual needs and attributes of pupils; it demonstrates a good knowledge of which pupils in the class have been accelerated and takes care to ensure that their progress is maintained. Pupils with specific learning difficulties benefit from excellent additional support; specialists discuss the needs of these pupils with colleagues to ensure that they can access the whole curriculum. Teachers noted that their teaching had benefited from this, challenging them to consider and refine their approaches to teaching.
- 3.17 The previous inspection recommended that systems be put in place for assessment and recording, the use of assessment to plan and the more consistent use of marking schemes. In response, the use of target setting and pupils' self-assessment throughout the school is now excellent, as seen in examples which clearly promoted pupils' learning and their understanding of how they could improve. Marking, which was also the focus of a recommendation at the previous inspection, similarly includes careful and helpful comments, enabling the pupils to make progress, thus testifying that the recommendation has been fully addressed.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. Through the school's Christian foundation, its great emphasis on caring for others and the excellent example set by staff, pupils learn high standards of behaviour and enjoy excellent relationships with one another and with the wider community. This maintains the excellent work seen at the previous inspection.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. They embrace and value the Christian ethos of the school and participate willingly in acts of corporate worship. A class began the school day with a simple act of worship, centred around a lit candle in a darkened classroom, which deeply moved them. Choristers contribute to profoundly spiritual occasions in the cathedral on a regular basis, and others in the school enjoy similar opportunities through, for example, the services sung by the Galilee choir. Pupils have high levels of self-confidence and are considerate and respectful towards one another. They recognise and celebrate the abilities and skills of all members of the school community; at a presentation given by music, art and design and technology scholars, pupils were very appreciative of the talents being demonstrated.
- 4.3 The development of pupils' moral awareness is excellent. They show extremely high levels of courtesy towards each other and to visitors, responding strongly to the teachers' high expectations of good manners. They respect their working environment and fully embrace the school's reward systems, through which they develop a keen sense of right and wrong. They engage in ethical initiatives, assuming positions such as energy monitors, with responsibility for reducing wasted energy. An assembly, prepared and led by a senior pupil, developed the school's awareness of fair trade with the developing world.
- 4.4 The social awareness of the pupils is excellent. Through aspects of the PSHCE curriculum and in RE, pupils explore themes relating to people in other parts of the world who are much less fortunate than themselves and to the work undertaken by missionaries. Participation in a broad range of charitable endeavours enables pupils to raise funds for worthy projects both near and far. Through the school council, pupils throughout the prep school influence decision-making and contribute to the running of the school. Election to these positions through hustings develops pupils' understanding of the democratic process. Pupils have recently been appointed junior road safety officers by county council officials and represent the school at meetings. Through a wide range of positions, such as team captains, head of house, monitors, head choristers and head pupil, they develop an excellent sense of responsibility and participation in a team which helps the school to run smoothly.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate excellent cultural awareness. They develop an appreciation of beauty, both in art and in music. Their excellent knowledge of their own culture develops through their active participation, for example, in musical and dramatic productions, including the mystery plays, as choristers and in the 'big draw' art project. Pupils are also well aware of the cultures and faiths of others. They develop their understanding through the geography and RE curricula and the sharing of significant celebrations from other faiths and cultures, which are sometimes linked to world cuisine days, organised by the catering staff.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.6 The quality of the school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent and has strengthened since the previous inspection, thereby ensuring that the school meets its aim to promote a strong Christian ethos, draw inspiration from its relationship with the cathedral and take a sensitive approach to pastoral care.
- 4.7 Staff provide excellent pastoral support and guidance. A deep sense of care permeates the life of the school, the staff focusing strongly on pupils' personal development, welfare and individual needs. They are vigilant in their supervision of the pupils in school, in boarding and in the cathedral. The weekly pastoral meeting is a central element in the outstanding communication of pastoral information and welfare concerns between all staff, all of which is meticulously recorded. Relationships between staff and pupils throughout the school, including boarding, are very strong, as are relationships between pupils. Pupils of different age groups mix well and strongly support one another.
- 4.8 The school is successful in promoting and celebrating good behaviour. Its measures to address inappropriate conduct are robust and seen by the pupils as fair. The school's measures to guard against bullying are excellent and have been commended by the local authority's anti-bullying committee. Staff and pupils have a high level of awareness of the dangers of bullying. Measures to prevent it are strong and successful, founded on the programme of assemblies and an excellent cross-curricular approach, co-ordinated through the scheme of work for PSHCE. The school's safeguarding measures are secure. It has addressed a regulatory requirement at the previous inspection in ensuring appropriate training, both for all staff and, in greater detail, for the designated persons. Governors also have a clear and well-informed awareness of safeguarding matters and undertake an annual review of the procedures.
- 4.9 The school has well-considered measures to reduce the risk from fire. Testing of equipment is up to date and evacuation drills are regular. They are carefully recorded and any action required is logged and monitored. Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored. Risk assessments are thorough and appropriate. Recently, for example, close collaboration between the school and cathedral staff has ensured very detailed planning for overseas choir tours. Health and safety measures are rigorous. The provision for pupils who are ill or injured is thorough and cases are carefully recorded and reviewed. The school has successfully addressed a requirement at the previous inspection to implement a written policy on first aid. Measures to provide for pupils with LDD are excellent, as exemplified by the high level of care and staff awareness of the needs of pupils with statements of SEN, enabling them to play a full part in school life. The school has a well-considered plan to improve access for those with disabilities, which meets requirements.
- 4.10 Medical, kitchen and boarding staff all make a strong contribution to the school's measures to promote healthy eating and regular exercise, which feature clearly in a number of curriculum areas; the catering manager leads lessons within the curriculum on healthy eating and experimenting with new tastes.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.11 The quality of the pupils' boarding education is excellent, having strengthened further from the high standards noted at the previous boarding inspection. This ensures that the school meets its aims to promote a strong Christian ethos, and to encourage citizenship, self-discipline and respect whilst taking a sensitive approach to pastoral care. The school has addressed the recommendation at the previous Ofsted boarding inspection to introduce a process of performance review for all boarding staff. The vast majority of boarders are choristers; the high quality of the boarding experience strongly supports their contribution to the musical life of the cathedral and facilitates the high level of commitment required of them. The successful integration of girls into the boarding life of the school, thereby doubling the number of boarders, has been a key factor in the successful introduction of girl choristers into the life and work of the cathedral. Boarding strongly supports the choristers in high levels of achievement, particularly in music, and in enjoying what they do. It enables them to stay safe and make a positive contribution to the life of the school and the cathedral.
- 4.12 The staffing for boarding has increased in proportion to the increase in boarding numbers, and includes the appointment of a resident housemistress. Boarding staff have appropriate experience and qualifications and their deeply caring approach ensures a warm, comforting, homely atmosphere. Clear lines of communication between boarding staff, school staff and cathedral staff ensure that pastoral matters and welfare concerns are effectively shared and addressed. The school has recently undertaken extensive refurbishment of its boarding accommodation to enhance further the care and warmth of its ambience, and it plans further refurbishment to complete the project.
- 4.13 Boarding benefits strongly from the high quality of relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. The introduction of girls was facilitated by the readiness of the boys to welcome them into the boarding community and to support them in learning the rigorous routines of the life of a chorister. Boarders participate in a wide range of activities in the evenings. They have adequate facilities to undertake their instrumental music practice and a quiet environment and computer access are provided to facilitate the completion of their prep. They have carefully-supervised internet access for research, leisure and communication with home, together with use of the sports hall, board games, chill-out areas, interactive games and television. Pupils noted in their questionnaire responses and in interviews that they enjoy boarding and commented that there is always plenty to do.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent and has strengthened since the previous inspection, ensuring that the school meets its aims to be a centre of excellence with a particular speciality in music, to enable pupils to reach their true potential and to promote a strong Christian ethos. A broad range of measures, strongly supported by a majority of governors living in close proximity to the school, ensures that they have an excellent oversight of school life.
- 5.2 The governing body, which is the cathedral chapter, has appointed wisely in its recruitment of lay advisors, to ensure that it can draw on additional breadth of expertise and experience. Governors thereby achieve a successful insight into the working of the school. They monitor its work thoroughly and provide stimulating support and challenge. The school runs very successfully as a department of the cathedral, enabling excellent communication and co-operative management between the cathedral and the school and ensuring that the school benefits strongly from the cathedral's financial management and its maintenance of premises and resources. Individual governors draw well on their areas of expertise to take responsibility for particular aspects of school life. Governors also develop a thorough insight into the school through unannounced monitoring visits, the chairing of school committees and by receiving presentations from staff and the head's report.
- 5.3 Governors are committed to their own professional development and have undertaken training in self-evaluation, safeguarding and safer recruitment. Matters of welfare and pastoral care are very closely monitored. Governors also draw on the expertise of a consultancy firm, all of which ensures that they are successful in discharging their responsibility for child protection, welfare, health and safety, both throughout the school and in the choristers' activities in the cathedral.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership and management are outstanding and clearly meet the school's aims to combine academic excellence with Christian values. The school has responded to the recommendation of the previous inspection to develop the roles of subject teams and managers further through the detailed oversight of the quality of education in each curricular area, together with an appraisal system which monitors the quality of teaching.
- 5.5 A clear sense of teamwork throughout the school results in staff knowing and taking to heart their roles and responsibilities. Staff communicate effectively with one another. Within the leadership team, members take an active interest in the management of all aspects of school life and not simply their own spheres of responsibility.
- 5.6 The leadership team acknowledges that constant self-evaluation and development are fundamental to the continuing success of the school and, during the present period of interim headship, there has been no less a determination to carry on this excellent work, inspired by outstanding leadership. The senior leadership team sets clear educational direction and priorities and ensures success in meeting them. Leaders of the academic, pastoral and boarding aspects of school life maintain

excellent oversight over their areas and foster excellent communication both within the school and, where appropriate, with the cathedral staff. Their close and fruitful working relationship with the cathedral is central to the success of the school.

- 5.7 The role of the heads of department has been strengthened since the previous inspection. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of departments in the core subjects is outstanding, ensuring that their subject leaders have a clear overview of the quality of teaching and learning, as well as of progression through the school. Much has been done to begin to develop these strategies in other subjects; however, though this has begun well, such excellent practice is not yet reflected across the whole curriculum.
- 5.8 Assessment and tracking are thorough at every stage of the school from Year 1, using nationally recognised criteria, Common Entrance grades and clearly defined internal criteria. This informs teaching and lesson planning well; in an English lesson, for example, the teacher realised the need to revise, and to liaise with other subject teachers to strengthen pupils' sequencing of months in the year.
- 5.9 The school follows safe and rigorous procedures in appointing staff and checking the suitability of all those who come into contact with children. It ensures that staff are suitably experienced and qualified for their roles. Staff undertake training in safeguarding and are prepared well to meet the needs of all pupils, to ensure that they are safe and to be vigilant for their health and welfare. The school is committed to the development and motivation of its staff; a positive approach to professional development enables teachers to set their own targets and be observed by a peer. Progress in relation to targets is discussed and recorded carefully with the peer reviewer. Teaching also draws on successful use of observation to help teachers refine their own teaching or to increase their confidence in an area in which they are less experienced. Administrative and support staff play an important role in the smooth running of the school and the provision of high quality pastoral care.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.10 The school's links with its parents are excellent. They have strengthened since the previous inspection and reinforce the school's fulfilment of its aims. The very positive relationship with its parents was demonstrated by the school's determination to remain open during the winter's adverse weather and by the pro-active measures, such as the 'walking bus', to alleviate drop-off and pick-up problems caused by long-term road works near the school.
- 5.11 Parents are very pleased with the education and support provided for their children. Their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were particularly positive, especially about the progress their children were making, the range of subjects available, provision for boarders and how the school responds to their questions, underlining the strength of the school's communication with its parents. Inspection findings endorsed these views. There were no significant areas of concern.
- 5.12 Staff in both the boarding and daytime areas of the school are readily available to answer concerns and many are in daily contact with parents. Communication is further enhanced by an informative website, weekly newsletters and useful handbooks, covering specific areas of school life. A regular head's letter provides a further connection and parents are invited to the annual speech day, which includes a review of the year. Parents are closely involved in the school's strategies to

ensure a smooth transition as their children move through the different stages of school life.

- 5.13 Parents are able to involve themselves in the work and progress of their children through attendance at sporting, musical and dramatic events, for example, as well as at cathedral services. The 'Friends' association is active in supporting the school and raising funds. Parents take part in a number of school events; they help on open days and were recently invited to participate in 'the big draw', contributing their drawing skills to a whole-school project. A link to the governing body is provided through the appointment of a parent as a lay advisor.
- 5.14 Parents of current and prospective pupils receive all the required information about the school. They receive useful information on their children's effort grades at frequent intervals and a full written report twice a year. The school handles any concerns from parents thoroughly and with sensitivity and care, following its appropriate published procedures and recording matters with due attention to detail.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding. The needs of the children are met through a high quality, developmentally appropriate curriculum. It fulfils the whole school's aim of providing an environment for personal growth in which children discover their talents and abilities. Children of all abilities receive constructive support with their learning. Robust procedures strongly promote children's welfare, ensuring an environment in which children feel safe and secure. The setting knows itself well, ensuring its capacity to build on high standards, and plans to develop greater integration between the Nursery and Reception children. The early years staff work well together. The absence of regular staff meetings as a whole team limits co-ordination across the age groups. Partnership with parents and other agencies is excellent. Children visit the cathedral regularly. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a Nursery and has greatly increased ICT provision.

6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.2 Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. The head of early years knows the setting well and has a clear vision for its development. Resources are well organised and plans exist to further develop the Reception outdoor provision. Risk assessments are detailed, well managed and reviewed regularly. Comprehensive arrangements exist for safeguarding children and all staff are suitably trained. The policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting are in place and ensure equality of opportunity. The tracking system is underdeveloped and the EYFS management plan to improve it further to ensure consistent monitoring of progress throughout the EYFS. Highly effective links exist with the local authority. Parents are strongly supportive of the setting. They offer their expertise in school and assist with outings.

6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. Staff are warm and enthusiastic and value each child as uniquely special. Small class numbers ensure that staff know children well and plan for their individual needs. Through insightful observations, staff ensure a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led learning. They make imaginative use of the available outdoor space to complement indoor learning. A good variety of outdoor equipment in the Nursery supports children's physical development. High priority is given to children's personal and social development through good reward systems. Key people promote consideration for others through clear expectations of safe and sensible behaviour. Additional needs are identified early and support is provided. The provision of healthy lunches and good hygiene practices are a priority.

6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. Children make good and often rapid progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Many reach, and some exceed, the expected goals by the end of Reception. Personal, social and emotional development is good. Children are happy and feel safe. They approach activities with enthusiasm and confidence, responding well to high staff expectations. Children are imaginative and creative, showing increasing levels of independence. Children's ICT skills are well developed. All children are effective communicators and active listeners. With support, Nursery children can sequence pictures, identify words and on occasion read text. Many count reliably and are starting to record numbers. Reception children read simple texts fluently and can write simple sentences. They count and record numbers reliably and can solve problems such as equal sharing. All children know how to keep safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. Relationships are strong. Children respect each other and work well in harmony. They benefit from regular exercise, learn about healthy eating, hand-washing and keeping themselves safe.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of school staff, members of the cathedral music staff and with the chair of governors and members of the governing body, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, assemblies and cathedral rehearsals and services. 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

Mr Christopher Sanderson	Reporting Inspector
Mr Ian Raybould	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mr Alex Osiatynski	Head of Department, HMC/GSA/IAPS school foundation
Mrs Sara Robinson	Early Years Lead Inspector