



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

EXETER CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Exeter Cathedral School

Full Name of School	Exeter Cathedral School
DfE Number	878/6000
Registered Charity Number	306934
Address	Exeter Cathedral School The Chantry Palace Gate Exeter Devon EX1 1HX
Telephone Number	01392 255298
Fax Number	01392 422718
Email Address	hmsec@exetercs.org
Headmaster	Mr Stephen Yeo
Chairman of Governors	The Very Reverend Dr Jonathan Draper
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	286
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (153 boys; 133 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 61 5-11: 169 11-13: 56
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 278
Number of Boarders	Total: 8 Full: 8 Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Katie Fisher
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	15 October 2013 to 18 October 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the ISI schedule, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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 31 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 Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

- (i) 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.

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is**

‘exceptional’ that term may be used for the top grade. Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology (‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘satisfactory’ and ‘inadequate’) as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Danice Iles

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Ms Anne Longton

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Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Exeter Cathedral School is a day and boarding school for boys and girls between the ages of rising three and thirteen. Founded almost 800 years ago as a choir school, it now educates up to 40 boy and girl cathedral choristers. It is situated in the heart of the city, in the precincts of the cathedral, where the choir sings evensong daily and leads the worship at Sunday services. The school is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, for which the Dean and Chapter are legally and financially responsible. The Dean and Chapter appoint a governing committee of which the Dean is, ex officio, chairman; some members of the Chapter sit on the governing body, together with co-opted members.
- 1.2 The school's ethos springs from its origins as a Christian foundation to provide for the spiritual, personal and academic education of the choristers. The school aims to nurture every pupil as an individual in a secure environment, to give to each the opportunity to make the most of his or her own gifts and to grow in faith, and to help pupils to move on to their chosen senior schools with confidence, and with standards set for their lifetime. The school welcomes pupils of all faiths and of none.
- 1.3 The school has two forms in every year group from Reception to Year 8, with the exception of Year 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for children aged rising three to five, has been re-organised since the previous inspection and is an integral part of the pre-preparatory school, which is situated in its own house and garden, across the Cathedral Green from the preparatory school. Additional classroom and playground space has been created in both the pre-preparatory and preparatory sections of the school, and the dining room has been extended. The refurbished boarding house, which is adjacent to the main school building, was originally for the choristers. It now offers a range of boarding options to all pupils. The present headmaster was appointed in 2011.
- 1.4 There are 286 pupils on roll: 61 in the EYFS, 169 in Years 1 to 6 and 56 in Years 7 and 8. In total, 8 pupils are full boarders and another 30 board on a flexible basis. The school has identified 32 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to whom it provides learning support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and one pupil has English as an additional language (EAL). A substantial number of pupils have particular musical talents.
- 1.5 The ability profile of the school is above the national average, with a fairly wide spread of abilities represented, and the average ability of different cohorts varies. Most pupils are of white British or European heritage, and there is a small diversity of other ethnic groups. The majority of the pupils' families live relatively nearby and most have professional or business backgrounds.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good. The musical achievements of some are exceptional. Pupils of all ages and abilities are successfully and happily educated, stimulated by many musical experiences. The school amply fulfils its principal aims to nurture every child as an individual, and to give to each the opportunity to make the most of his or her own gifts and to grow in faith. Provision for the education and care of children in the EYFS is excellent, as are its overall quality and standards. From Year 1, pupils develop good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills over a wide range of academic and creative subjects. The broad academic curriculum is complemented by an excellent range of clubs and other extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. Teaching of good quality makes a significant contribution to the development of the pupils' academic potential. At its best, teaching is energetic and engaging. Some less successful teaching lacks pace and challenge, and there is inconsistency in marking and the use of assessment information.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. In a caring, nurturing atmosphere, underpinned by the Christian faith, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent. Pastoral care is excellent and a key strength; pupils respond to the happy, encouraging atmosphere with quiet confidence and courtesy. There is full understanding of the needs of the choristers. The quality of the boarding provision is good and the boarders settle happily into the small, friendly house. Arrangements for the pupils' welfare, including safeguarding, and their health and safety, are meticulous.
- 2.3 The governance of the school is excellent; the governors have responded effectively to the requirements and recommendations of the previous inspection, and have facilitated many changes. The excellent drive and vision of the new senior leadership have resulted in significant improvement and development. The leadership is highly effective and management is of good quality; not all policies are implemented and monitored with full effectiveness in teaching. Excellent links with parents are another key strength of the school. Parents value greatly the supportive, encouraging atmosphere in which their children are educated.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Disseminate best practice in teaching, particularly through peer observation and work scrutiny.
 2. Ensure consistent monitoring and implementation of the assessment and marking policies.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aim to be a place where value is fairly given to academic achievement and to the wider areas of the curriculum.
- 3.3 Outcomes for EYFS children are excellent. Children make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and are prepared extremely well for the next stage in their learning. They make rapid progress towards meeting all the Early Learning Goals, with many on course to exceed them. Nursery children appreciate their outdoor sessions, and enjoy cutting and gluing autumn leaves and using conkers to make patterns in paint. Reception children enjoy music, learning songs in preparation for the Christmas nativity play, and confidently playing a variety of percussion instruments.
- 3.4 Pupils are confident, conscientious and articulate, reflecting good standards in literacy and numeracy. They listen carefully and apply themselves diligently. They develop a good understanding of scientific concepts and apply their creative skills well in art and in design and technology (DT). Pupils also apply well their knowledge of mathematics and of information and communication technology (ICT), as well as their ability to think logically, particularly in their use of a programming language to create games and animations. They have a love of literature and creative writing. Their ability to think and work independently is clear in the most successful teaching, but is not consistently evident across all subjects.
- 3.5 The musical achievements of many pupils are exceptional, and their skills are nurtured and developed from an early age. The choral singing of the EYFS children and older pupils at a harvest festival service in the cathedral was of a high standard. The choristers achieve outstanding levels of singing. They perform regularly on national media and on international tours, most recently to Vienna. Pupils are very successful in external music examinations and competitions, with standards well above expectations for their age.
- 3.6 The pupils' physical abilities in a wide range of sports are good and sometimes excellent. Pupils develop their talents well, both individually and as part of a group or team. They achieve consistently well as teams in inter-school regional competitions in all major sports, and individuals have participated in rugby, hockey and cricket at regional and county level, and at national level in athletics.
- 3.7 The attainment of the pupils cannot be measured in relation to a fixed national average, but is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations, based on evidence from their performance in lessons and scrutiny of their work. Results of standardised tests of attainment indicate that pupils achieve results that are higher than national norms in English and mathematics. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. On leaving the school, almost all senior pupils proceed to independent schools, some highly selective. They consistently achieve awards and scholarships for academic and, particularly, for musical excellence.

- 3.8 Progress for pupils with SEND or EAL is good and they apply themselves diligently. This is evident from the steady improvement in the scope and structure of their writing. The most able make progress that is good in relation to their abilities, especially when given tasks to allow them to show their imaginative and creative abilities.
- 3.9 Children in the EYFS co-operate happily and enjoy their learning; they achieve extremely well through stimulating play and valuable first-hand experiences. They are active, creative learners, who explore, investigate, are able to work independently, and make choices and decisions.
- 3.10 Pupils from Year 1 onwards also have good attitudes to learning. The choristers' enthusiasm and dedication have a positive influence on learning throughout the school. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to work both independently and a part of a group, although these are limited in some areas. At all ages, pupils gain much satisfaction from presenting their work well, conscientiously applying their knowledge to their written work.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.11 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.12 In the EYFS, programmes for language and communication, and personal, social and emotional development, enable children to express themselves clearly, confidently and with enjoyment, helping all to reach, and many to exceed, the expected levels of development. Interesting activities promote enthusiasm and encourage children to enjoy a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities, together with an effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks. Children, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able, respond well to the high expectations of the staff through the stimulating play and valuable first-hand experiences provided.
- 3.13 Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum, which promotes a full range of skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate to the pupils' age and ability. Pupils are offered a wide range of subjects and experiences. They are encouraged from an early age by welcoming, well-stocked libraries and visits from children's authors. The use of ICT has increased since the previous inspection and provision continues to develop. However, the development of the pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum is constrained by the distribution of ICT equipment.
- 3.14 The deployment of subject specialist teachers and the division into ability groups for core subjects for older pupils help to ensure that they make good progress. All pupils study French from Year 3 upwards, and older and more able pupils study Latin. Religious education is accorded great emphasis, and is closely linked to the school's personal, social and health education provision. Pupils are actively encouraged to consider their future role in the world, and the effect that their actions may have upon it.
- 3.15 Provision for pupils with SEND or EAL is very effective in meeting their individual needs, through carefully planned one-to-one lessons from the dedicated learning support department. Detailed education plans give clear targets, and these are well maintained and reviewed regularly to ensure that they are implemented in timetabled lessons. Pupils identified as able, gifted and talented (A, G and T) are extremely well provided for through challenging activities in some academic subjects such as English and DT, and in clubs such as Greek and the 'Out of the Box' group, which extend their reasoning, technological and linguistic skills. They also have the

opportunity to attend enrichment days organised by a local university and senior schools. Provision for music is outstanding. There are numerous choirs and musical ensembles, catering for a wide range of abilities.

- 3.16 The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, and the pupils value these and participate with enthusiasm. A balanced range of sports, musical, practical and aesthetic clubs is offered, suitable for all ages and ranging from ballet to art club, and nature club to bell ringing.
- 3.17 Educational excursions include regular trips to a wide variety of places of both educational and cultural interest which support the pupils' learning well. International trips to France and other European destinations increase the pupils' cultural awareness.
- 3.18 An excellent outdoor education programme involves pupils in a range of activities. It takes full advantage of the local moorland and coasts, and for older pupils, extends further afield to the Lake District. The experience of a very different learning environment helps to develop their self-confidence and teamwork skills.
- 3.19 The pupils benefit from excellent links with the community, both locally and internationally, many of which relate to the school's musical tradition. The school plays a leading role in regional choirs and outreach choral programmes in local schools. Regular concerts raise funds for local charities. The school has recently established links with a school in Africa, giving pupils an understanding of children with lives very different to their own.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.20 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.21 Teaching staff in the EYFS maintain high standards by regularly identifying areas for improvement. Excellent identification of individual needs, efficient planning and use of information gathered from continuous assessments, resources of good quality and high quality individual attention ensure that all children, including the more able, are supported, engaged and motivated effectively, and make rapid progress. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Challenging questioning develops the children's thinking and encourages their curiosity and learning. Children see their work and interests valued in high quality displays. Support staff promote the children's infectious enthusiasm for learning from the outset.
- 3.22 In the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools, good quality teaching helps pupils to develop their academic potential, in line with the school's aim to provide an environment where the pupils can make the most of their gifts and talents. In the preparatory school, the most successful teaching is highly enthusiastic and energetic, moves at a rapid pace, engages the pupils and has clear learning objectives linked to success criteria. Some less successful teaching lacks pace and challenge, and makes less imaginative use of learning resources. Overall, books and worksheets are used well in support of the pupils' learning.
- 3.23 Teaching is generally well planned, with documented reference to individual pupils' needs. Educational support for pupils, including those with SEND and any with a statement of special educational needs, is utilised very effectively. The school fully makes the provision set out in any statement of special educational needs. The progress of A, G and T pupils is accelerated by the provision of work that offers extended challenge and through participation in after-school clubs.

- 3.24 Relationships between teachers and pupils are invariably extremely good, with most pupils' behaviour effectively managed in an understanding way, ensuring a harmonious working environment. This is particularly evident in oral sessions, where pupils participate confidently in open, lively discussions. Questioning and dialogue are often used very effectively to challenge pupils. In some instances, teaching makes good use of opportunities for pupils to engage in both independent and collaborative work. Occasionally, inattentive behaviour is not managed sufficiently firmly to encourage academic rigour, limiting progress.
- 3.25 In some teaching, the pupils' progress is not routinely assessed with a clear focus on identifying those who achieve well in relation to their ability. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own progress and learning are limited. Recommendations from the previous inspection to further strengthen the use of assessment data to adjust planning and improve the pupils' progress have been addressed but have not yet been fully met. Assessment evidence is not being used sufficiently to adapt teaching to meet the needs of the pupils and help them to understand how they can improve their learning. There are inconsistencies in marking and a lack of continuity in practice across departments, subjects and year groups. In some marking, comments are brief and do not give suggestions for how pupils may improve. In the best marking, clear and positive feedback on areas of strength is combined with insightful comments on how pupils might improve their work or extend their understanding further.
- 3.26 In their questionnaire replies, a few parents and a small minority of pupils doubted the usefulness of homework. Parents and pupils did not refer to homework as a concern in conversations with inspectors, and pupils were seen to settle well to their work during their prep time in school.
- 3.27 Pupils are confident to seek help when they need it, supporting fulfilment of the school's aim to nurture every child as an individual. Pupils confirm that their teachers give time willingly to help them improve and overcome difficulties.

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 excellent.
- 4.2 In the EYFS, the children's personal development is excellent. They are provided with secure foundations for their future well-being in all aspects of their learning. They happily share resources, take turns and organise themselves effectively, becoming visibly more confident and independent during their Reception year in preparation for their transition to Year 1. Children trust and respect their teachers and relate well to each other. They respond to school life with great enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- 4.3 The spiritual development of the pupils is excellent and is a strength of the school, in accordance with its aims. Pupils benefit spiritually from the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity engendered by the worship space of the Chapter House where most assemblies take place, and of the Cathedral. The provision for choristers, and the school's Christian foundation and ethos, contribute to the school's particular character and purpose. The excellence achieved by the choristers provides an incentive to others to attain high standards in many aspects of school life. Drama productions and other opportunities to speak in public, such as reading prayers and lessons in the Cathedral, help pupils to build confidence. Pupils sing in assemblies and services with great enthusiasm and proficiency, developed through the high level of musical education that all enjoy. Assemblies and services, such as harvest festival, have a spiritual message that evokes a sense of faith and togetherness in pupils. The pupils absorb the values they explore at such events and through the religious education programme. Opportunities for reflection help them to become aware of their responsibilities to others and to become quietly confident and self-aware.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral awareness is excellent, and they show a clear acceptance and developed understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Mutual and collaborative responsibility is evident. In the school council, pupils explore issues within the school and also the wider community. Pupils develop a strong sense of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves, for instance by contributing willingly to their chosen charitable causes, locally, nationally and globally. These activities also support pupils' developing social, political and economic awareness.
- 4.5 The social development of the pupils' is excellent and is central to the life of the school. The strong sense of community fostered throughout the school's pastoral care programme develops their social awareness. They arrive happily at school, feel safe and are confident to share their thoughts with members of staff. They move around the school in a calm fashion and are welcoming and courteous. The older pupils, mainly in Year 8, fulfil roles of responsibility such as prefects, senior choristers, leaders of musical groups, team captains and librarians, as well as assisting with visitors to school and helping the younger pupils with reading. The pupils have a sense of belonging and speak enthusiastically about their school, highlighting their positive experiences. Their comments in their questionnaire replies and in their interviews were sensible and mature.
- 4.6 The pupils' appreciation of cultural traditions different to their own is very well developed through their work within lessons and cultural, particularly musical, events. They steadily develop an excellent understanding of the Christian faith

alongside an understanding of and respect for other faiths and cultures. Pupils acquire an awareness of diversity through their studies of history, geography and literature, and from visiting speakers. In English, older pupils showed a mature understanding of the very different lives led by children in the United Kingdom and Afghanistan. Pupils leave the school with excellent personal skills that prepare them very well for the transition to the next stage of their education.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Pupils throughout the school are extremely well supported by the pastoral care system and feel very well cared for. Weekly meetings are held to discuss individual pupils' well-being, and communication is highly effective between staff, parents and pupils. If they have any concerns, pupils know whom they may contact within school and are aware of the independent listener whom they may contact if they prefer to talk to someone outside school.
- 4.9 The school amply fulfils its aims and good relations exist between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves. There is an atmosphere of friendliness and quiet respect in and out of lessons. The EYFS staff meet the needs of all children whilst fully appreciating their individual differences. As they develop their independence, the children form strong relationships with one another and with the adults who care for them, particularly their key person.
- 4.10 From the EYFS onwards, pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and to exercise. Meals are nutritious and balanced, with a variety of options; portions are generous and pupils with particular dietary requirements are catered for. Fruit is served at break times. All age groups in the preparatory school have ample opportunity to enjoy exercise in an excellent, newly designed playground, with a sheltered, covered area for inclement weather. Good provision is made for physical education and games, the latter off site. The pre-preparatory school has a much enjoyed, spacious and well-equipped garden area.
- 4.11 In the pre-preparatory school, including the EYFS, the behaviour policy is implemented well, resulting in a happy and busy atmosphere where pupils benefit fully from all the opportunities provided. In the preparatory school, good behaviour is suitably rewarded by a variety of means, and rewards and sanctions are recorded, enabling pupils to observe the accumulation of house points. Sanctions are monitored regularly. Questionnaire responses indicated that a small minority of pupils consider that teachers are not fair with rewards and sanctions, though responses in pupil interviews indicated confidence that staff provide a genuinely caring community. A few parents and pupils expressed some concern about bullying in their questionnaire replies. In interviews, however, pupils expressed the view that relationships amongst peer groups are positive and if bullying issues arise, they are dealt with promptly. Inspectors found that the school has extremely clear and appropriate anti-bullying and behaviour policies. Records indicate that there are very few incidents and that any concerns are rapidly followed up in accordance with these procedures and with due consideration for the pupils involved. They also demonstrate that sanctions are consistent and administered taking due account of any related difficulty or disability.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable, well-monitored plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND, and also for the education of A, G and T pupils.

- 4.13 Pupils are able to present their views to their elected school council, which meets on a regular basis, and proposals made have led to various initiatives, such as a review of school menus and significant improvement of the playground. In their questionnaire replies, pupils overwhelmingly agreed that they like being at the school.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 Staff promote welfare, health and safety extremely effectively. A thorough system of review and self-evaluation ensures realisation of the school's aims to provide a friendly, stimulating and caring environment where every pupil feels valued and safe.
- 4.16 In the EYFS, children's welfare is given paramount importance and promoted effectively to ensure their safeguarding, health and safety. First-aid training for EYFS staff is appropriate and supported further by the medical centre in the preparatory school.
- 4.17 Safeguarding arrangements throughout the school have strong regard to official guidance and successfully ensure safe practice; robust policies have been developed and meticulous recording systems are in place.
- 4.18 Training in safe recruitment is appropriately arranged for senior staff and governors, and child protection training for all staff and governors is updated at the required intervals, including for those with particular responsibilities. The school and the cathedral take very seriously their joint responsibilities for the welfare of the choristers and implement supervision arrangements with care and diligence.
- 4.19 Fire drill, staff training and equipment maintenance records demonstrate highly efficient health and safety monitoring systems. Staff and pupils are aware of fire exits and routes, and these are clearly identified throughout the school. Fire procedures are regularly practised in the EYFS and children are taught how to manage risk and keep themselves safe. Comprehensive risk assessments, regularly reviewed and effectively implemented, have been established to ensure safety throughout all buildings and the campus, in addition to policies and procedures to ensure the safe transfer of pupils between different buildings. This meets the requirement of the previous inspection.
- 4.20 Provision for pupils who are ill, injured or have additional needs is comprehensive. Day pupils can be accommodated in the medical centre until their parents are able to collect them from school. Appropriate documentation allows for the safe administration of non-prescription medication to all pupils, and prescription medicine as necessary. Care plans for pupils with additional needs have now been developed for staff to access as necessary. Staff have appropriate, efficiently recorded first-aid training. An efficient system exists to provide first aid anywhere on the campus. First-aid boxes throughout the school are checked and restocked on a regular basis. Staff are aware of those with specific medical conditions.
- 4.21 Admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained and stored appropriately.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.22 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.23 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders benefit from the well-established links the school maintains with the cathedral, particularly through the participation of chorister boarders in services. Together with the nurturing, homely atmosphere in the boarding house, this encourages and develops the boarders' independence, confidence and tolerance. Boarders have comfortable relationships with each other and with the boarding staff, and enjoy being part of the school community; their friendships extend across age groups.
- 4.24 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Boarders settle quickly into life in the small, friendly boarding house with its family approach to their care. There is full understanding of the demanding schedule and the needs of the choristers. Recent changes include arrangements for restricted access to boarding accommodation and provision of a generous number of well-equipped, comfortable recreational areas for relaxation, indoors and outdoors. These are particularly spacious and include a games room, a large comfortable common room, a snug area for quiet pastimes and a bistro area for boarders to prepare snacks. Sleeping accommodation is bright, and boarders are encouraged to personalise their own bedside area if they wish. Whenever possible, those who board on a flexible basis have their own dormitory bed space when they choose to stay. Arrangements for laundry are attended to daily by the duty staff and boarders are responsible for collecting their own laundry from individual baskets. Following some adjustments made during the inspection, boarding accommodation is secure. Well-established systems ensure that the whereabouts of the boarders are monitored at frequent intervals.
- 4.25 A suitably equipped and staffed medical centre provides 24-hour medical care, and a local general practitioner attends boarders who are unwell; they may return home if their illness is prolonged. Documentation is efficient and now includes an individual and central recording system for medication, as well as individual care plans for any boarders with additional needs. Appropriate policies support the care provided by the medical centre, and the school now ensures that duty staff are alerted if a boarder is ill.
- 4.26 A range of activities, such as equestrian and ukulele clubs, may be enjoyed when school and choral commitments end. Weekend activities include trips to the swimming baths, nature trails and shopping centres. Spontaneous trips are arranged as a reward after particularly heavy commitments. Contact with parents and relatives is encouraged and boarders often choose to use their mobile telephones for this. They have supervised access to a computer and the internet. Boarders meet weekly with the house-parents and can also express any concerns by posting in the 'voice-box'. The house-parents are easily available for parents to contact, and they liaise appropriately with parents immediately should any concerns arise.
- 4.27 The safeguarding of the boarders is managed through robust systems and policies, which are implemented well. Staff receive appropriate regular training and strong inter-agency links have been established. Regular roll calls and registration systems are in place, and boarders are aware of where they may go, according to age, on the campus, unaccompanied by an adult. Visitors to the boarding accommodation are

- suitably supervised. Regular fire drills and checks are carried out, and recorded appropriately.
- 4.28 Boarders report that there are no bullying issues, but should they have concerns they say they would feel comfortable discussing these with the boarding staff or the independent listener, whom they know they may contact.
- 4.29 The effectiveness of leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. The boarding house runs smoothly and enables the choristers to integrate into boarding life. The house-parents, house-tutors and Gap Year students provide duty cover for the evenings and weekends in the boarding house, and staff names are displayed to inform the boarders. Staff accommodation is suitably separate and controlled. An efficient handover system ensures that all staff are aware of any current issues regarding a boarder's general well-being. The house-parents attend a weekly liaison meeting with all staff, to ensure effective communication about the welfare of the boarders. All Gap Year students undergo a suitable induction programme and their role and inclusion on the boarding staff have proved to be popular with the boarders.
- 4.30 The well-written boarders' handbook provides helpful induction information and advice to assist with settling in and the smooth running of the house; it gives reminders of expectations and guidelines about, for example, the use and misuse of mobile telephones. The school behaviour policy, with its considered, graduated approach to sanctions, has a section that applies to boarding. An up-to-date and relevant development plan also demonstrates self-evaluation by the boarding staff.
- 4.31 Boarders' responses to the pupils' questionnaires and their comments were mainly positive; overwhelmingly, they like being at school. A small minority of boarders do not think that the food is of good quality, although this was not evident in discussions or at mealtimes. Parents were virtually unanimous in their positive responses to all points in the questionnaire, particularly emphasising that their children enjoy boarding and are treated as individuals.
- 4.32 The recommendations of the Ofsted boarding report of 2009 had all been met at the time of the previous ISI inspection in 2010. Elements of recruitment checks found to be unsatisfactory at that time have been rectified.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing body includes a good range of particular skills and experience. Recommendations of the previous inspection have been attended to with care, and significant improvement has resulted. Administrative roles within the school have been clarified and strengthened, and the governing body has implemented effectively its responsibility for the oversight of school management and of policies and their implementation, particularly of those related to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. All policies are presented to them for review; they receive regular presentations from subject leaders and have initiated a programme of pupil tracking.
- 5.3 The governors' sub-committees are extremely thorough in their approach to their duties and in auditing and monitoring their areas of responsibility. This enables the governing body to fulfil highly successfully its responsibilities for standards and financial planning. Its commitment over recent years to increased investment in staff, resources, and the ongoing upgrading and refurbishment of premises and accommodation, boarding and academic, has resulted in significant improvement.
- 5.4 The school's proximity to and strong links with the cathedral community give the governing body an excellent insight into the working of the school. It shows strong commitment to providing support and challenge. The structure of sub-committees, which include members of staff, contributes well to the governors' knowledge of the school and enables them to prioritise effectively when making decisions. Specific governors, who make regular visits, are responsible for the EYFS and for safeguarding. Excellent arrangements ensure that all pupils are effectively safeguarded in a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment.
- 5.5 The governing body is effective in discharging its responsibilities for statutory requirements, such as safe recruitment. The informative annual review by all governors of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school is approached with careful consideration. High priority is given to this area of responsibility, and governors receive appropriate training.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.7 Members of the senior management team effectively fulfil their different levels of responsibility. They act in accordance with the aims of the school to fulfil these delegated roles, especially successfully in the areas of policy implementation for the safeguarding of pupils, safe recruitment, welfare, health and safety, and the EYFS.
- 5.8 A high standard of leadership is provided through successful hard work and a dedicated commitment to excellence in education, particularly choir school education. This is evident in the clear overall educational direction provided. High aspirations and a comprehensive vision, strongly supported by the governors, result in high quality leadership, and the very effective management of some areas. The EYFS has improved significantly since the previous inspection and its leadership is

excellent, with policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting, including those for safeguarding, implemented rigorously. External agencies provide extra support where appropriate. The leadership is extremely effective in self-evaluation, and in perceptively identifying and setting priorities for development within a well-considered and realistic timeframe.

- 5.9 Improvements have been instigated in several areas, such as staff development, structure, communication and resources, including ICT, throughout the school. The last has brought many benefits, including the ability to analyse the data collected from new schemes to assess the pupils' progress, but this has not yet been utilised to full advantage. The senior management team has more greatly focused individual areas of responsibility, and is supported by dedicated administrative staff. Its success is illustrated by the good quality of the pupils' education, and the excellent standard of their personal development and of pastoral care.
- 5.10 The capacity for sustained improvement in the EYFS is excellent. Senior managers carefully monitor the setting and the progress of each child, working together with parents to support children needing help with learning and development. The education programmes are effectively monitored, and regular self-evaluation takes account of the views of staff and children. Staff are well qualified and appropriately trained in the development of young children, child protection and health and safety. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection.
- 5.11 At middle management level, some subject leaders have successfully prepared well-considered subject development plans to link into the school development plan. The work scrutiny carried out during the inspection indicated that monitoring of teaching is not yet fully established and, in areas such as assessment and marking, policies are not effectively implemented. There is very little peer observation, although an appraisal system is in operation, and staff generally appreciate its value and that of the linked lesson observation by senior management.
- 5.12 Senior management is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating staff of high quality and ensuring that they are suitably and regularly trained for their roles in meeting the educational needs of all pupils, in safeguarding, and in welfare, health and safety. Selection procedures for staff are robust, as are appointment checks for new governors and staff. In-service training is relevant and regular, while continuing professional development is encouraged and supported across the school.
- 5.13 Links between the school and parents are excellent and strongly support the aims of the school. The school maintains many open and varied channels of communication. It actively encourages parents to liaise closely with teaching staff and to play a part in the education of their children.
- 5.14 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that parents are overwhelmingly positive in their views and are supportive of the school; they are very happy with the education their children receive. They agreed that the school provides a friendly, welcoming and safe environment, and commented favourably on the accessibility and quality of the staff, the use of email for communication, the high standards expected of pupils and the support given to pupils to achieve these. Parents of current and prospective pupils are given access to all relevant information about the school. The introduction of a weekly newsletter has been welcomed by parents. Two written reports are sent out each year to keep parents informed of

their children's attainment, progress and effort in all subjects. These reports are detailed, presenting a clear picture of each pupil's achievements.

- 5.15 The Friends of Exeter Cathedral School organisation connects parents and the school through fund-raising and social activities, providing social and other events for parents, staff and pupils. Parents often come into school to talk to different groups about their occupations, for example to discuss life as a pilot.
- 5.16 Communication is effective and is sensitive to working parents. Parents appreciate the regular formal email correspondence and the availability of teaching staff for informal chats on a daily basis.
- 5.17 The school has a clear and appropriate complaints procedure. Parents' concerns are heard promptly and treated with care and consideration. The leadership and teaching staff are available at the beginning and end of every day so that parents can approach them to raise concerns or queries. As a result the vast majority of concerns are dealt with swiftly and informally.

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