

School inspection report

25 to 27 February 2025

Lichfield Cathedral School

The Palace

The Close

Lichfield

WS13 7LH

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors and school leaders maintain the school's ethos, promoting the integration of learning, leadership, faith, and service. They support pupils' wellbeing through appropriate policies, procedures and strategic planning, which has led to expanded subject choices and the effective training and deployment of staff responsible for the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme and the 'wellbeing' programme. Governors actively support and challenge leadership through committees and school visits, to ensure that the school meets the Standards and provides the education that they intend.
2. The school complies with the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that pupils have equal access to opportunities and do not suffer any discrimination against them. Choral scholars and choristers of both sexes are supported in their programme of activities with Lichfield Cathedral and its community work.
3. A well-structured curriculum supports pupils' development and academic skills across all year groups. The introduction of additional BTEC subjects and the effective use of outdoor education and enrichment activities enhance creative learning. Staff provide pupils with individual support according to need. This contributes to high outcomes in academic and vocational qualifications.
4. Leaders have redesigned the school day to give form tutors more time to support their pupils both academically and in personal development. However, this time is not always used effectively to provide such support.
5. Leaders have recently implemented a new behaviour for learning policy to provide a more structured approach towards discipline, rewards, and sanctions and guard against any inconsistencies in the management of behaviour. The effective PSHE programme fosters pupils' positive attitudes to learning, respect for others, and emotional resilience.
6. The school develops pupils' leadership skills from an early age, through positions such as house captains and senior prefects, and participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) and the Sports Leadership Award.
7. The school promotes British values, such as individual liberty through celebrating each pupil's different talents and distinct qualities, and inclusion and cultural diversity through charitable activities and work in the local community, such as the *MusicShare* initiative. Pupils learn about democracy, global citizenship and financial literacy, with career guidance and work experience opportunities integrated into their education.
8. Leaders are thorough in their identification of potential risk to pupils' wellbeing. Leaders maintain a prominent safeguarding culture through appropriate policies and procedures, regular staff training, and close collaboration with external agencies.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that form time is used consistently effectively to support pupils' pastoral wellbeing and academic development.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors and leaders communicate the ethos of the school effectively and promote the importance of what the school considers the four 'pillars' of learning, leadership, faith and service being embedded into the daily lives of the pupils.
10. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing through the effective implementation of policies and procedures. Self-evaluation and strategic planning are part of the cycle of annual meetings, which has led to developments and initiatives across the school. These include increasing the range of GCSE and BTEC subjects, such as the addition of music technology, and training a specific team of staff to deliver the PSHE, RSE and wellbeing programmes in order to improve the quality of the teaching of these subjects. The recent development of the music and drama centre has given pupils more opportunities to develop their performance skills in these areas and showcase their achievements.
11. Governors support, check and challenge leaders' work effectively through a range of committees. They visit the school regularly to listen to pupils and staff and check that the site is maintained and secured effectively. Governors regularly review the work of academic and pastoral leaders to ensure that leaders have the appropriate knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively and that outcomes for pupils are as positive as possible.
12. Leaders ensure that the school does not discriminate against pupils and meets its requirements under the Equality Act (2010). Leaders promote principles of equality through policies and planning which enable equal access to and participation in the choristers' and choral scholars' programme and scholarships, including for pupils of both sexes. Leaders ensure that the schedule for the choristers and choral scholars is balanced and appropriate flexibility is given to them to allow them to fulfil all their responsibilities while looking after their wellbeing.
13. Leaders ensure that all required information about the school's policies and procedures is provided or made available to parents through the school's website or parental portal. Reports to parents about their child's attainment and progress are regular, detailed and informative. Leaders provide the relevant local authority with the required information relating to any funded pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
14. Leaders manage any parental complaints effectively. They respond to parents who have voiced a concern in a timely and appropriate manner in accordance with the comprehensive complaints policy, which is regularly reviewed and available on the school's website. Leaders maintain an appropriate record of complaints and any actions taken by the school as a result of these. They review this record as part of their evaluation of the school's practice to help determine whether any further actions are required.
15. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies. They seek advice from other professionals, police and local safeguarding partners where needed. Leaders have established effective relationships with the wider community, including the leadership of the Cathedral and its community, for the benefit of the choristers and choral scholars.
16. Leaders understand and implement effective risk management arrangements, including those for premises, pastoral and safeguarding considerations, to ensure that there is a secure environment for pupils, including the choristers and choral scholars. Staff responsible for undertaking risk

assessments are appropriately trained and leaders regularly monitor and review practice. Risk assessments identify potential risks and appropriate actions are taken to reduce or eliminate risks identified both in school, around the school sites and on educational visits.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders and managers provide a suitable, age-appropriate curriculum that develops a broad range of academic skills. Recent developments include additional BTEC subjects from Year 10 and leaders have expanded outdoor education for younger pupils and enrichment activities such as dance, music, and art to enhance creative learning. The inclusive curriculum ensures access for all pupils, including the choristers, while upholding fundamental British values. Schemes of work develop learning and subject knowledge cohesively and methodically, following the national curriculum requirements in the senior school to prepare pupils for public examinations.
19. Pupils acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy, and numeracy. In the junior school, English tasks develop pupils' vocabulary and accurate use of punctuation, encouraging independent editing. Pupils engage with complex themes in text such as *Holes* by Louis Sachar and undertake diverse writing tasks, from newspaper articles to persuasive posters. Pupils with higher prior attainment receive bespoke challenges. In the senior school, teachers challenge pupils to justify their ideas with cogent examples and collaborate effectively while doing so. For instance, pupils in Year 10 build nuanced interpretations of sophisticated English texts such as *Macbeth* through discussions on figurative language and structure.
20. Mathematics is taught through coherent schemes of work, ensuring continuity of learning across school sections. Pupils engage in problem-solving, and teachers match work to pupils' prior attainment. For example, pupils with higher prior attainment apply learned rules to complex scenarios. Teachers make effective use of resources, including those that enable practical application, to enable junior pupils to grasp concepts, while senior pupils demonstrate developed mental arithmetic skills. Skilled questioning fosters precise use of mathematical terminology.
21. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and make good progress through tailored teaching, targeted support, and regular progress reviews. One-on-one support, where needed, contributes to these pupils' high value-added scores in public examinations.
22. Teachers provide pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) with effective support when this is required. Well-chosen classroom resources help pupils develop their English comprehension and vocabulary. Staff often engage with pupils in their first language to support their linguistic skills further.
23. Comprehensive assessment systems in the junior and senior years enable leaders to track individual pupils' progress from their starting points on a regular basis. Teachers use this data to tailor instruction, offer support and provide challenge at an appropriate level. Pupils actively engage in self-assessment, fostering ownership of their learning. Pupils typically achieve high academic outcomes at GCSE, A level, and BTEC, as well as in externally accredited drama, music, and Royal School of Church Music examinations. Sixth-form pupils undertake the extended project qualification (EPQ), exploring topics such as aeronautical technologies and the ethics of fictionalising the Holocaust, with consistently sophisticated results.
24. Staff make robust use of assessment in the early years to shape their planning and teaching. This helps ensure children make good progress. Staff provide children with early support should there be any developmental concerns, particularly in prime areas of development. Collaboration with

parents helps tailor the curriculum to individual children's needs, supporting children to meet early learning goals (ELGs). Engaging, interest-based activities build key skills.

25. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and supportive. They understand examination criteria, anticipate misconceptions and ensure pupils' progress through well-structured lessons that make efficient use of pertinent resources. Effective teaching across subjects in all sections of the school enables pupils to link new skills to prior learning, using varied methodologies such as timed tasks, low-stakes quizzes and targeted questioning. Pupils make good progress and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, with independent thinking encouraged at all levels.
26. Leaders successfully encourage pupils to actively participate in a suitable variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Enrichment opportunities include language trips to Europe and targeted academic support, such as examination practice sessions outside of lesson time. The Sports Leadership Award and DofE activities give pupils the opportunities to further develop their leadership skills and achieve externally validated qualifications. Art, chess and astronomy clubs are part of a wider selection which allow pupils to follow their interests and engage in new activities. There is a wide range of sports, such as rugby and hockey, which allow pupils to participate in competitive activities, as well as a large number of performance opportunities through drama and music, such as lunchtime recitals.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 27. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

28. The robust PSHE programme teaches pupils about justice and fair treatment, encouraging mutual respect for people who have backgrounds different to their own. In addition, it fosters positive attitudes towards learning, enabling pupils to express themselves confidently with politeness and good humour. In the junior school, mutual respect is promoted through proactive strategies like *'Brilliant, Bothering, Bullying'* which leaders use to instil a culture of respect. As a result, pupils understand how to treat each other in a supportive and respectful manner and show appreciation of each other's identities.
29. Junior school leaders provide pupils with opportunities to build self-esteem and develop intrinsic motivation for good behaviour and respect. Pupils in Year 4 take on various responsibilities, including house captain, eco or council membership, play leaders, library assistants and sports captains. In senior school, older pupils similarly engage in leadership roles, with senior prefects and mentors receiving training to ensure they understand their duties.
30. Teachers actively support pupils' self-esteem through verbal praise, house points, and public recognition in assemblies and newsletters. Performance opportunities, particularly in music, help build confidence. The school also provides targeted emotional and wellbeing support for pupils who have SEND and those who speak EAL, ensuring all pupils develop resilience. Activities such as drama productions, sports team activities and music rehearsals help foster teamwork, camaraderie, determination, and commitment. However, the regular form tutor sessions incorporated into the redesigned school day are not always used to support pupils' pastorally or academically as effectively as possible.
31. Pupils learn about diverse faiths in religious studies lessons, while creative subjects foster spiritual reflection through music, drama, poetry and art. In addition, pupils develop further spiritual and moral understanding through reflective practices aligned with the school's Christian ethos. Prayers, Eucharist services in the Cathedral and chapel, and assemblies create a sense of fellowship, which gives pupils a foundation for ethical discussions and exploration of personal beliefs.
32. The school promotes pupils' physical and mental wellbeing through a broad physical education (PE) programme and extracurricular activities. Lessons highlight the importance of warming up and down to promote positive habits and mitigate injury risks. Leaders ensure depth and breadth of opportunities for competitive and recreational extra-curricular PE opportunities and efficiently monitor pupils' participation in these. Some pupils compete externally in the local community, with others achieving regional and national recognition.
33. Early years staff help children recognise and express their emotions through using strategies such as 'colour monsters', which help children identify particular emotions and consider their own feelings and how these affect their behaviour. The PSHE and wellbeing programme incorporates self-reflection activities and teaches pupils strategies to manage stress and pressure. As a result, pupils develop verbal skills to articulate feelings, fostering emotional intelligence and personal development.
34. A clear and age-appropriate RSE programme is in place, delivered by specialists. The subject is monitored effectively and there is regular assessment of pupils' knowledge and their confidence in

their understanding. The RSE programme provides pupils with relevant and age-appropriate information and the opportunity to talk about what may be sensitive subjects in a supportive, respectful atmosphere. Leaders regularly review the material covered with pupils and as a result ensure that topics are relevant to pupils and reflect their needs, such as understanding the dangers of sexual exploitation and unhealthy relationships.

35. Leaders have high expectations for behaviour management, with comprehensive logging and monitoring of behaviour and bullying incidents. They have recently implemented a new behaviour for learning policy and related procedures in order to bring about a more structured and systematic approach to dealing with rewards and sanctions and reduce inconsistencies in practice. All staff have been trained to implement the strategy and respond to any behavioural or bullying concerns effectively.
36. Leaders and managers use effective anti-bullying systems across both sections of the school. In the junior school, staff use red and amber warning systems so that pupils understand consequences. This makes pupils feel secure and that bad behaviour or bullying will be managed well. In the senior school, staff log incidents of pupil behaviour and bullying. Leaders investigate any trends and use their findings to inform staff training and the support provided to pupils. Leaders are proactive in communicating with parents and applying higher level sanctions as appropriate whilst also seeking to recognise and reward pupils' positive behaviour.
37. Supervision is effective, with visible staff presence during breaks, lunch, after school and lesson transitions. Leaders maintain the required ratios of staff to children in the early years.
38. Staff maintain admissions and attendance registers in line with the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders monitor attendance closely, promptly following up any unexplained absences or emerging patterns. The school informs the local authority of pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard times of transition.
39. Governors and external experts support leaders in ensuring effective health and safety and fire safety arrangements through appropriate policies and procedures. Firefighting equipment is regularly audited and termly fire drills are conducted. Routine safety checks cover electrical and gas systems, as well as legionella. Staff receive health and safety training, including with regard to fire safety. Premises are well maintained, with appropriate security measures in place.
40. The medical centre provides suitable care for unwell or injured pupils, with trained staff ensuring appropriate treatment. Medication is securely stored, and first aid arrangements are thorough. Effective communication between medical, academic and pastoral staff and to parents supports pupils' wellbeing. Sufficient first aid-trained staff are available, with all early years staff trained in paediatric first aid.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

41. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

42. Leaders teach pupils about British institutions in an age-appropriate manner. In the role play area, children in pre-Reception pretend to make sick pets well by being the vet, demonstrating their understanding of how people help in the community. In Reception, dentist's visits explain how to keep teeth healthy after learning about *Red Riding Hood's* snack basket. As a result, pupils start to develop an understanding of how people help us in the community. Older pupils are taught about the work of the police, the health service and Parliament.
43. Leaders promote the importance of inclusion and cultural diversity. The PSHE programme includes topics such as prejudice and discrimination, which develop pupils' understanding of the harm of racism and misogyny, for example. The curriculum develops pupils' respect for law, democracy, and cultural diversity, whilst presenting a balanced perspective on political issues. Pupils learn about different cultures and global citizenship through subjects such as modern foreign languages, while cross-curricular links reinforce the importance of tolerance and social responsibility. The school's work with its Ukrainian refugee community and its application to become a *School of Sanctuary* by creating a culture of welcome and belonging for those forced to flee their homes further reflects its commitment to fostering inclusivity and mutual respect within the school community. As a result of these measures, pupils develop an appreciation of diversity and the importance of inclusion and equal treatment.
44. Through the PSHE programme, pupils develop an understanding of practical financial matters, such as how to read a wage slip, the UK tax system and how student loans work. Pupils learn about budgeting and develop their awareness of factors they will need to consider as they move towards entering the adult world, such as paying rent, utility bills, food and clothing.
45. Leaders actively promote charitable engagement, with the school councils effectively leading initiatives that support both national and local charities, including those with direct links to the school community. A well-structured calendar of fundraising events enables pupils to plan and lead activities. For example pupils in Year 11 worked with pupils in Year 2 to record a piece of music to raise money for a national charity supporting those with motor neurone disease. Such engagement develops pupils' sense of social responsibility.
46. Through the academic curriculum, pupils are given the opportunity to discuss topics on morality and ethics, by exploring themes such as judicial systems, ethical business practices, or the causes and impact of poverty. This encourages critical thinking and allows pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of legal frameworks, and fosters their ability to discern right from wrong and make informed, responsible decisions. As a result, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of moral and ethical principles.
47. Choristers contribute to local community work through the *MusicShare* initiative that involves them engaging with a range of educational institutions and participating in joint choirs and ensembles held in the Cathedral. These experiences encourage collaboration, leadership, and a sense of community engagement among choristers. Other community engagement opportunities are provided through volunteering as part of DoFE activities, mentoring younger pupils in the school and school council membership.

48. The comprehensive careers programme in the senior school enables pupils to consider a wide variety of careers and gain an understanding of the world of work. As they move up through the school the programme develops so that pupils become increasingly aware of the different pathways and can choose their subject options accordingly. Leaders ensure that pupils have weekly updates on possible post-school courses and career pathways through the sixth-form newsletter as well as regular lectures on a variety of professions. Staff support pupils to undertake relevant work experience, make applications to study at degree level and acquire apprenticeships.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 49. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

50. Leaders promote a school culture which gives safeguarding high importance. They ensure that appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented diligently. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. They meet regularly with the safeguarding team and scrutinise external audits of the school's practice to assure themselves of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.
51. The safeguarding team respond appropriately and rigorously to safeguarding concerns. They communicate appropriately with pastoral staff to ensure that pupils affected by safeguarding issues are supported effectively. The safeguarding team seek advice from local safeguarding partners and refer concerns to pertinent agencies when appropriate. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities maintain suitable records of safeguarding concerns and how these have been responded to.
52. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, including at induction. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities check staff's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding periodically. Regular updates keep staff aware of current issues, policies and practices within the school. As a result, staff understand how to follow the school's safeguarding procedures and feel confident in knowing how to recognise and report concerns, including any relating to risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Suitable safeguarding arrangements for choristers are in place, including through the deployment of chorister matrons who accompany them during all rehearsals and Cathedral commitments.
53. Leaders provide guidance for staff in safer working practices and in maintaining professional boundaries with pupils. Any issues are followed up and investigated as appropriate. Leaders implement appropriate procedures to manage any low-level concerns or allegations against staff appropriately. Staff understand the whistle-blowing procedures and referral systems within the school.
54. Leaders maintain suitable filtering and monitoring systems and investigate and follow-up issues when they arise, regularly testing the system's effectiveness. Older pupils' access to social media is monitored. The school teaches pupils how to stay safe online and provides them with guidance on specific issues, such as keeping their personal information private. Pupils are advised as to how to keep safe whilst moving around the site, and effective supervision is in place whilst pupils are moving between the secured buildings.
55. Leaders implement a robust staff recruitment process. Senior leaders, the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor are trained in safer recruitment procedures. All necessary pre-employment checks are carried out in a timely manner and recorded systematically on the single central record of appointments (SCR). This is regularly scrutinised by governors as part of their monitoring of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 56. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Lichfield Cathedral School
Department for Education number	860/6012
Registered charity number	1137481
Address	Lichfield Cathedral School The Palace The Close Lichfield Staffordshire WS13 7LH
Phone number	01543 306170
Email address	reception@lichfieldcathedralschool.com
Website	www.lichfieldcathedralschool.com
Chair	Mr Eric Lunt (acting)
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Hannam
Age range	2 to 19
Number of pupils	529
Date of previous inspection	18 to 21 January 2022

Information about the school

57. Lichfield Cathedral School is a non-selective, independent, co-educational day school which was re-founded in 1942 as a preparatory school for male pupils, including choristers. Female pupils have been admitted since 1974 and female choristers since 2012. The school is a charitable trust governed by a board of trustees, of whom five are nominated by the Cathedral chapter. The current chair of governors has been in an acting role since April 2023.
58. Since the previous inspection, the school has acquired new accommodation to house a design technology block, developed outdoor learning areas, with an extended play area at the junior school site. A new performing arts centre has been opened.
59. There are 28 children in the early years, comprising two classes. Children and pupils from Nursery up to the end of Year 4 are educated at the Longdon site, three miles from the city centre. The remainder are taught in buildings located in and around the Cathedral close.
60. The school has identified 111 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. The school has identified English as an additional language for nine pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to nurture each pupil's individual talents, to instil in them the values of learning, leadership, faith and service and to encourage them to perform in all areas to the best of their ability.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

25 to 27 February 2025

63. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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