

School inspection report

16 to 18 April 2024

Hereford Cathedral School

Old Deanery

The Cathedral Close

Hereford

Herefordshire

HR1 2NG

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
AREAS FOR ACTION.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
MATERIAL CHANGE REQUEST.....	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION.....	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHEDULE OF UNMET STANDARDS	14
<i>Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing</i>	<i>14</i>
SCHOOL DETAILS	16
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	17
INSPECTION DETAILS	18

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors use a range of activities to provide effective oversight of leaders and managers. However, they have not ensured that leaders and managers fulfil their responsibilities consistently. Leaders have not ensured that all policies, specifically those relating to the supervision of pupils and risk assessments, are consistently implemented to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. As a result, the Standards are not consistently met.
2. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively. Teachers use a range of methodologies to engage pupils in their learning successfully. As a result, pupils make good progress. Written feedback from teachers helps pupils to improve their work. However, it lacks consistency.
3. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified by leaders and successfully supported by teachers. They make good progress from their assessed starting points.
4. Leaders support the emotional wellbeing of pupils effectively. Pupils use strategies taught and understand that they share the responsibility to maintain their wellbeing. They also know how to seek advice and access the range of support offered by the school.
5. The school's co-curricular programme enables pupils to access various physical, intellectual, and creative activities.
6. Boarding leaders and staff create an atmosphere of mutual trust in the boarding house. Boarders receive attentive care, facilities are of a high standard, and they consider it to be a home-from-home.
7. Pupils behave well. Incidents of bullying are rare and, if they occur, are effectively dealt with. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. They are inclusive, accepting of differences, and show respect for characteristics protected by law.
8. Leaders ensure that relevant health and safety legislation and fire regulations are followed.
9. Pupils forge strong links with the local community through participation in cathedral activities and the cadet force. Leaders have implemented a programme of careers education and individual advice for pupils that follows national benchmarks. The sixth-form diploma enables older pupils to successfully develop the interpersonal skills for employment and their future lives. The provision for younger pupils is not as well developed.
10. There is a positive culture of safeguarding. Leaders have established various methods for supporting the pupils in reporting concerns. When issues arise, leaders act swiftly and appropriately to promote welfare.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- leaders and managers ensure that when risks are identified, mitigations are consistently applied
- leaders and managers ensure adequate supervision of pupils
- leaders and managers ensure that all policies are effectively implemented.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure pupils receive consistent feedback about how to improve their work
- ensure younger pupils' careers education is comparable to that for the older pupils.

Material change request

11. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include an increase capacity from 583 to 612.

- The safeguarding team have considered potential risks associated with a planned increase in numbers and planned accordingly.
- Leaders ensure that the safeguarding culture is well embedded and pays due regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state.

- Leaders have suitable plans to increase capacity of the safeguarding team.
 - Leaders have drawn up and effectively implement a written health and safety policy. This standard is likely to continue to be met if the change to number is approved.
 - The regulatory reform (Fire Safety) order 2005 is followed. Leaders have considered additional pressures on egress points and have made suitable plans.
 - Pupils are not always effectively supervised.
 - A written risk assessment policy has been established by leaders.
 - Risk assessments are undertaken, and most mitigations are effective. However, some mitigations are not consistently applied.
 - Governors and leaders have considered how the robust system of safe recruitment of additional staff would be managed.
 - Leaders have considered the capacity of teaching, eating and social spaces and ensured that the additional number of pupils can be safely accommodated without compromising wellbeing.
 - All information, policies and reports are published on the website or provided to parents and prospective parents and specified by statutory guidance.
12. As the Standards are not consistently met, the requested material change cannot be recommended.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors use a range of planned activities, including policy and procedure reviews, and on-site meetings, to provide oversight of leaders and managers. However, they have not ensured that leaders and managers fulfil their responsibilities effectively and consistently. As a result, the Standards, including those relating to boarding, are not met.
14. Leaders do not ensure that all policies, specifically those relating to the supervision of pupils and mitigating actions as the result of risk assessment, are consistently implemented in order to actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.
15. In other aspects of self-evaluation, leaders have a clear view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders identify risks, and actions are carried out to mitigate them. Unintended consequences are identified, and leaders make changes when appropriate.
16. The published complaints policy outlines processes and timeframes for the handling of issues. Leaders endeavour to resolve complaints quickly and informally, in line with the policy. As a result, formal complaints are rare.
17. Leaders plan and manage the delivery of a curriculum and co-curriculum which succeeds in achieving the school's shared aims of developing pupils who are kind and have integrity.
18. There is an on-going programme of support for staff to continuously develop their teaching skills, including sharing good practice and providing feedback based on lesson observations and work scrutiny.
19. Leaders ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the management of the boarding house. Consequently, pupils feel safe, happy and their needs are met. The accommodation is comfortable and well maintained. Suitable arrangements are in place to hear the views of boarders or for them to raise concerns.
20. In the sixth form, leaders have an appropriate understanding of the needs of older pupils. They provide facilities, pastoral care and co-curricular activities that support academic, physical, social, economic and mental wellbeing. The recognition by leaders of the need for the interpersonal required by employers has led to the successful inception of the sixth-form diploma.
21. Leaders provide information for parents and prospective parents on the school website or on request. Published policies include safeguarding, curriculum and boarding statement of principles. Leaders regularly review progress of the accessibility plan and adapt it as required to ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met.

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

22. Standards are not met consistently with respect to supervision of pupils and risk assessment. Therefore, the standards relating to leadership and management are not met.
- 23. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

24. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively. This curriculum includes clearly articulated expectations for pupils' learning progression in all subjects. Older pupils have a suitable range of options for GCSE and sixth-form study. At all stages, curriculum plans support and prepare pupils for the next step in their education. Leaders implement monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately taught and adheres to the school's aims and values.
25. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and classroom management skills. Their passion and commitment to seeing pupils progress is evident. Thorough planning ensures that teachers use resources effectively to support the needs of pupils. Teachers use a range of methodologies to engage pupils in their learning successfully. As a result, pupils are attentive and actively participate in lessons. Teachers actively encourage risk-taking when asking questions, supporting pupils in developing the depth of their answers. Teachers' feedback during the lessons enables pupils to correct misconceptions and take the next steps in their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress.
26. Written feedback from teachers supports pupils and they value this personal support. However, it lacks consistency, varying in format and style between departments and individuals. Some pupils find this inconsistency challenging and are unsure of how to improve their work.
27. Pupils who have SEND are identified by leaders and supported. They make good progress from their starting points. The learning skills department cascades preferred practice across departments as part of the staff development programme. Data is shared appropriately to help teachers identify potential issues. Appropriate provision is put in place to support individual needs in lessons. Teachers also use a referral system to flag pupils who may need extra help. These pupils are supported individually and in small groups. When leaders make referrals to external specialists, advice is followed.
28. Leaders ensure that boarders do their homework in the boarding house with staff on hand to help if needed. Boarders make good academic progress from their starting points. They have a suitable amount of free time, and staff implement a comprehensive programme of weekend activities supported by appropriate risk assessments.
29. The curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for pupils' improvement of speaking and listening skills. As a result, pupils demonstrate well-developed communication skills, listening respectfully to each other and articulating arguments.
30. Leaders plan a wide range of recreational activities, which are well attended by pupils. These activities develop a range of sporting, academic, aesthetic and creative skills.
31. Leaders have implemented a school-wide system of assessment and tracking. Pupils make good progress against academic targets determined by teachers' judgement and relevant data. Leaders carefully track individual pupil progress and trends for cohorts. They are acutely aware of the link between pastoral and academic needs. The recent changes to the pastoral structure ensure that information is appropriately shared, and teachers consider the needs of the whole pupil. As a result, leaders implement appropriate academic and pastoral interventions. At GCSE and A Level, performance of pupils is above national averages for all pupils.

32. Pupils who speak English as an additional language participate in a support programme. This programme enables pupils in Years 9 to 11 to further understand the nuances of English and life in the United Kingdom. In addition, they access regular individual support sessions focusing on reading skills and speaking, enabling them to make good progress from their starting points.

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

33. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

34. Leaders support the emotional wellbeing of pupils in finding the balance between academic progress and commitment to extracurricular activities. They use information from a system of online emotional wellbeing evaluations for pupils. Teachers check individual responses, spot concerns and help pupils. Pupils use the range of strategies taught on 'wellbeing Wednesday' and understand that they have a responsibility to try to maintain their wellbeing. They also know how to seek advice and support should they need it.
35. Pupils display a high level of mutual respect for diversity and appreciate differences. Staff and pupils celebrate the individuality of pupils.
36. Pupils have regular opportunities to explore their spiritual understanding through regular chapel services, which emphasise the promotion of wellbeing. Pupils recognise the benefit of taking time to reflect. Activities such as the debating society further develop their moral understanding and empathy.
37. Leaders' planning and modelling of behaviours have created a nurturing community with strong mutual respect between pupils and staff. Pupils' self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge flourish as a result. Pupils are caring for each other and are happy at school.
38. Leaders ensure the school site provides a safe and well-maintained environment for pupils. The potential challenges of the location of the site have been risk assessed, and effective control measures are in place concerning access to school buildings and public access.
39. Leaders have identified the risk to pupils of crossing onto the city centre, and mitigations are planned. However, they are not consistently implemented. The published school rules define the boundary and clearly state pupils may not cross this during the morning break. Supervision duties are allocated to reduce risk. However, some pupils leave this boundary during this time and the planned supervision is not consistently in place to prevent them. Some, particularly younger, pupils are not confident that staff are always available outside school buildings at break times.
40. The school's co-curricular programme enables pupils to access a wide range of physical, intellectual, creative and musical activities. These foster a strong sense of self-knowledge and self-esteem. Pupils are aware of the benefits of engaging with the broader life of the school and the transferable skills that this brings them. The activities enable pupils to build strong bonds with one another and establish friendships with those of different ages.
41. Leaders ensure that the personal, social and health (PSHE) education programme is well resourced and taught regularly. The relationship and sex education curriculum supports and prepares pupils for the next stage of their development. This programme is subject to an ongoing process of evaluation to which pupils contribute.
42. Boarders receive attentive care, especially when unwell, with suitable short-term provisions and proper medication management. Staff maintain cleanliness and ensure the facilities are of a high standard. Nutritious meals and ample snacks are provided. Health and safety protocols, including fire drills, electrical safety checks, and security measures, are diligently enforced.

43. Boarding leaders and staff create an atmosphere of mutual trust in the boarding house. They are happy to eat, play and work together. Boarders value the transition produced by the journey from the school site to the boarding house and liken it to 'coming home'.
44. Leaders communicate expectations clearly regarding behaviour. Pupils behave well and conduct themselves in an orderly manner when moving between lessons and around the site. The pupils feel that sanctions and rewards are consistently applied.
45. Incidents of bullying are rare and, if they occur, are effectively dealt with. This rarity is a result of leaders' promotion of the value of kindness and appropriate policies and procedures. Pupils feel confident to raise concerns, that they will be listened to, and that appropriate action will be taken by staff.
46. Leaders maintain admissions and attendance registers. Staff promptly follow up on any unexplained absence. Leaders notify the local authority of any pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard times.
47. Leaders ensure that relevant health and safety legislation and fire regulations are followed. They follow the advice of external specialists when appropriate. Safety checks and maintenance of equipment are suitable. The school medical centre provides effective first aid and medicine administration.

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

48. Standards are not met consistently with respect to supervision of pupils and risk assessment.
- 49. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

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

50. Leaders plan a suitable programme of economic education and preparedness for work. The curriculum begins in Year 7 as an introduction to business problem-solving. It progresses through the school, culminating in the recently introduced diploma in the sixth form. This diploma covers the management of personal finances, cooking on a budget, loans and credit cards. Pupils have regular visits from prominent speakers, deepening their understanding of the complexities of the world of work.
51. Pupils understand that living in a democracy means that others may think differently to them. They listen respectfully to the views of others and provide suitable contrary arguments. Where political issues are brought to pupils' attention, teachers, and often pupils themselves, offer a balanced presentation of views. Pupils practise the principles of democratic government through forums such as mock school elections and various school councils.
52. Pupils forge strong links with the local community by participating in cathedral music activities and the cadet force. These links enable them to understand their place in the social tapestry of the area and British society. Regular celebrations and services allow pupils to develop respect for local institutions and services.
53. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and apply this successfully to contemporary and historical examples. They feel comfortable addressing the attitudes and behaviours of their peers if inappropriate. Pupils attribute this to the curriculum and positive role modelling from teachers. The pupils are inclusive, accepting of differences, and respect neurodiversity, culture, gender and faith.
54. Pupils take advantage of the wide variety of positions of responsibility, and these roles enable them to work across differing age and social groups. These responsibilities give them a well-rounded understanding of others within their school community. Pupils have many opportunities to take on these positions of responsibility and leadership within the sixth form. Boarders take turns performing acts of service, such as tidying after meals.
55. Teachers support pupils in developing empathy and considering the needs of those in broader society. Pupil involvement in local and global citizenship projects ranges from community carol singing, organizing games for Ukrainian refugees and supporting a school project in Tanzania. Leaders encourage and support pupils to initiate fundraising events, including a recent fashion show to raise money for a children's cancer charity.
56. Pupils are enabled to plan their future in which they can contribute to society through a suitably designed careers advice programme. Leaders have implemented a programme of education and individual advice for pupils that follows national benchmarks and allows them to plan life after school. The sixth-form diploma enables older pupils to develop ethical understanding, leadership and interview skills. A comprehensive external speaker programme further supports careers education. Currently, pupils in Year 10 and above are well supported in careers education, however, younger pupils receive less support. Leaders have already identified this and made appropriate plans. The majority of students go on to study at their chosen universities in the United Kingdom. A smaller number apply for international university places or go on to undertake vocational training.

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

57. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

58. Governors are appropriately trained and effectively oversee safeguarding, including safe recruitment practices.
59. Leaders appropriately train staff to spot welfare concerns, manage disclosures and take appropriate action. All new staff participate in specific safeguarding induction, which includes consideration of statutory guidance, local risks and the risk of radicalisation. This induction and ongoing training are thorough: leaders spot and fill gaps in individuals' knowledge. Staff take their responsibilities seriously, so establishing a culture of safeguarding.
60. Leaders have successfully established various methods for supporting the pupils in reporting concerns. These methods include older pupils trained to listen, use the support request forms to raise worries about peers, and open access to school nurses. When issues arise, leaders act swiftly and appropriately to promote welfare. Leaders have established successful working relationships with four local authorities.
61. Teaching enables pupils to develop strategies to support their own welfare, such as to whom to report concerns and how to manage interactions with members of the public in the cathedral precincts. Pupils feel safe in school.
62. Leaders maintain suitable arrangements to support pupils in staying safe online. Lessons prepare them to navigate today's digital society's positive and negative aspects. Filtering and monitoring systems are effective, and staff take swift action if a concern is flagged.
63. Procedures to safeguard the welfare of boarders are effective. Leaders have established systems for boarders to report concerns. These include an independent listener who is well known and is separate from the school's management. In addition, leaders provide boarders with information on how to report safeguarding concerns to external bodies. Security arrangements in the boarding house ensure that pupils are safe at all times and appropriate separation by age and gender is maintained.
64. Leaders ensure appropriate guardianship arrangements and suitability of lodgings and host families are effective.
65. Leaders implement a robust staff recruitment process. All appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out and recorded systematically. These arrangements include regard to pupils' contact with cathedral staff and volunteers.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
NMS 2.1	The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary.
NMS 2.2	The school's leadership and management, including its governing body where appropriate, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, appropriate to their role and undertake appropriate training as required.
NMS 2.4	The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met.
NMS 2.5	The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

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

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 8	Where section 87(1) of the 1989 Act (3) applies in relation to a school the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
8(b)	such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools or the National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Students under Eighteen by Further Education Colleges.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16	standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
16(a)	the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

	up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
16(b)	appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
NMS ² 9.3	The school ensures that the welfare of boarders at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
NMS 20.3	The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and individual needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.

² National Minimum Standards for boarding schools ('NMS')

School details

School	Hereford Cathedral School
Department for Education number	884/6004
Registered charity number	518889
Address	Hereford Cathedral School Old Deanery The Cathedral Close Hereford Herefordshire HR1 2NG
Phone number	01432 363521
Email address	hmpa@herefordcs.com
Website	www.herefordcs.com
Proprietor	Hereford Cathedral School
Chair	Mr Christian Morgan-Jones
Headteacher	Dr Michael Gray
Age range	11–19
Number of pupils	558
Number of boarding pupils	33
Date of previous inspection	2 November 2022

Information about the school

67. Hereford Cathedral School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in the centre of Hereford. The school is a charity and limited company, overseen by a governing body. The school is organised into the senior school, for pupils aged 11 to 16, and a sixth form. The current headmaster was appointed in September 2021. The current chair of governors was appointed in April 2023.
68. Boarding is provided in a boarding house located nine miles from the school.
69. The school has identified 225 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
70. English is an additional language for 36 pupils.
71. The school states its aims are to provide children aged 11 to 19 with a world-class education through sector-leading teaching and individual care, alongside a broad range of opportunities to develop every aspect of their potential. The Hereford Cathedral School culture aims to produce well-balanced, confident and considerate young adults who are real-world ready.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 April 2024

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

73. 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 head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

74. 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

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For more information, please visit isi.net