

# Bristol Cathedral Choir School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135575
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	361459
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Russell HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	553
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	133
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Parsons
<b>Headteacher</b>	Neil Blundell (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	College Square Bristol BS1 5TS
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Thirty-one lessons were observed, taught by 30 teachers; there were also a number of briefer visits to lessons. Meetings were held with students, staff and governors. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, 95 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Consistency in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness with which teachers use assessment to support students' learning.
- Whether systems for setting targets and tracking achievement are now more established and their impact on students' progress.
- Whether the academy's curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students.
- Whether apparent improvements in sixth form achievement are secure and sustainable.
- The role that middle leaders play in the academy's development and improvement.

## Information about the school

Bristol Cathedral Choir School opened in September 2008 in the same accommodation as its predecessor school, which was an independent school. Much of the site has been refurbished and further building work, currently underway, will provide additional accommodation.

The academy is now heavily oversubscribed and, while the number of older students is relatively small, Years 7 - 9 are full. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language are below average and much lower than the proportions in the local area. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The academy's specialisms are in music and mathematics.

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors carried out a monitoring visit a year ago. At this time the academy was judged to be making good progress.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Bristol Cathedral Choir School has made considerable progress in the two years since it opened as an academy. The transition to academy status has been managed very well: much has changed in the past two years, but developments have been well planned and implemented, and priorities for improvement selected carefully. The academy is well placed to continue its growth and development. Leaders have a clear, accurate and detailed understanding, both of the progress that has been made and the things that are still to be achieved; they are ambitious to achieve more.

The academy's environment is very pleasant. Students are very well cared for and supported. Despite the sometimes cramped and challenging site, they feel very safe and their behaviour is exemplary. The vast majority enjoy school; attendance levels are well above those seen nationally and students arrive punctually to their lessons. GCSE examination results are high and students make good progress, although they make satisfactory progress in the sixth form.

Students are taught well. The development and improvement of teaching has been a key focus for leaders and much has been achieved. The overall quality of teaching is good, although some variability remains and teaching is satisfactory in a minority of lessons. The use of assessment to support learning, a key weakness at the time of the monitoring visit a year ago, has improved significantly. In particular, the way in which the academy sets targets for students and tracks their achievement has improved considerably. A particular barrier to some students making even more progress in their learning is the academy's curriculum. Although it has a number of strengths, the range of subject options for older students is relatively limited.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Working in partnership with other providers where appropriate, develop the range of courses available to students in Years 10-13 in a way that matches their needs and abilities as closely as possible.
  - Ensure that all students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.
  - Reduce the remaining variability in the quality of teaching, in particular by:
    - ensuring that all teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons that move at a sufficient pace and match different students' targets and current attainment levels closely.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Students overall achievement is outstanding: they make good progress from their above-average starting points in Year 7 to attain high standards at the end of Year 11. Students' attainment of five or more higher grades including English and mathematics is a particular strength: a much higher proportion of students achieve this than would be expected from their starting points in Year 7.

Patterns of achievement across the groups of students that make up the school population are very consistent and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress.

Students are enthusiastic about school and learning, and their responses to the inspection questionnaire were very positive. Most are confident and capable learners, and lessons enable them to gain new subject knowledge and understanding well. Students generally have well-developed speaking and listening skills, and they collaborate together well in pairs and groups.

Students are considerate and friendly, and they behave very well in lessons and around the site. Behaviour has improved in the year since inspectors last visited. The overwhelming majority of students' say that they feel safe in school at all times.

The academy's specialist status makes an increasingly strong contribution to students' achievement and their wider outcomes. Students achieve well in mathematics and music. Their participation in musical activities has increased enormously in the past two years and students cite this as one of the academy's most significant areas of improvement.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Students are very well cared for and supported. They are known as individuals and almost all are confident in the academy's ability to support and advise them correctly. Support for the development and well-being of individual students facing challenging circumstances is a notable strength: the academy can point to striking examples of where it has helped individual students to overcome significant barriers to their education.

Teaching is good in the large majority of lessons. Teachers have very positive relationships with students, teach key subject knowledge and understanding rigorously and ensure that students have a thorough understanding of examination requirements. The way in which the academy tracks students' achievement and the way in which teachers use assessment in their teaching have improved significantly in the past year. Teachers now typically check students' learning more carefully during lessons. Students say that they now have a much clearer idea about their targets and how well they are doing, although they sometimes lack a sufficiently precise understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and meet their targets.

Although good overall, some variability in the quality of teaching remains. Teaching in the less-effective lessons typically has the following features:

- insecure planning that does not link the lesson's activities closely enough to its key objectives

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- a slow pace to the lesson
- a lack of variety and interest for students
- activities that are not sufficiently shaped to match different students' capabilities and current achievement.

The academy's curriculum has a number of strengths, for example the way in which it supports the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Students also have access to a wide range of musical and sporting opportunities. However, the range of optional courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is limited. The small size of these year groups makes it difficult to develop the curriculum at the moment. Limited use has been made of partnerships with other providers to allow students access to courses and options elsewhere, although leaders are actively working to develop such partnerships.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

How well do leaders across the academy drive improvement?

The Principal and his senior colleagues are providing clear, determined and highly effective leadership and this has enabled the academy to make a very strong start. Governors provide valuable challenge and support; they played an indispensable role in enabling the predecessor school to gain, and make a smooth transition to, academy status.

Senior leaders' evaluation and understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses are well developed and thorough. Their understanding of the quality of teaching and the strengths and weaknesses in lessons is based on regular and rigorous observation of lessons. Senior leaders follow up any weaknesses assiduously.

Much good work has been done to develop middle leaders' skills and to enable them to make a full contribution to the academy's development. This group of leaders is increasingly effective, although there is still some variability in the extent to which they set sufficiently high expectations and provide challenge and support to staff in their teams.

How good are other aspects of leadership and management?

The way in which the academy safeguards its students is thorough and meets government requirements well.

A wide range of effective provision is in place to promote community cohesion. The academy's work as a specialist music college is making an increasingly strong contribution to this area. Work to evaluate the impact of the provision is less well developed.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Leaders have good regard to the need to promote equality. They are committed to ensuring that everyone does well. Improvements to the academy's systems for target setting and achievement tracking are helping senior leaders to analyse and evaluate the performance of different groups more closely.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress as they move through the sixth form. Examination results were close to the national average in 2009, although higher- and middle-ability students achieved better than lower-ability students. Results improved slightly in 2010 and lower-ability students achieved more. Many of the students' other outcomes are good. Students, for example, attend well and make a strong contribution to the wider life of the academy.

Sixth form leadership has been through a difficult and turbulent time. A new head of sixth form took up post at the start of this term. Although very early days, she already has a clear understanding of which areas need to improve. In particular, she understands that:

- the range of courses available to students is quite narrow
- while teaching has many strengths, for example teachers' very positive relationships with students, lessons do not always provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers responded positively to the questionnaire. A particularly large proportion of those who responded feel that their children enjoy, and are safe in school. There were few written comments and no pattern to the few negative comments that were made. As the inspection took place in the first few days of the new term, many parents (particularly of students in Year 7) left most questions blank and commented that it was too early to form any judgements.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bristol Cathedral Choir School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 553 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	60	31	33	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	45	45	47	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	41	30	32	8	8	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	38	33	35	8	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	42	42	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	27	46	48	8	8	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	24	49	52	9	9	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	35	37	39	6	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	48	32	34	4	4	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	38	41	43	0	0	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	29	40	42	6	6	5	5
The school is led and managed effectively	46	48	35	37	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	58	32	34	4	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



17 September 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Bristol Cathedral Choir School, Bristol, BS1 5TS**

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We think that the academy has made a very good start and we judged it to be good.

The way in which staff look after and care for you is outstanding. This helps almost all of you to feel very safe and happy in school. Your behaviour is also excellent and has improved in the year since inspectors last visited.

You are well taught and this helps you to make good progress and attain high standards. However, although most lessons are good (and some are outstanding), some are less effective. We have asked the academy to continue working on making lessons as consistently good as possible.

While the curriculum is good in many ways, the range of courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form is quite narrow. Given that the numbers of students in older year groups are too small to offer a bigger range of courses, partnerships with other schools and colleges could help broaden the options on offer.

The sixth form is not doing quite as well as the rest of the school at the moment, although examination results improved a little this year. Leaders have a good understanding of the areas that need to be improved and we have asked them to continue working on these so that everyone can make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

The Principal and his colleagues have achieved much in the past two years. They have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development, and know what to do next to continue the academy's improvement.

Yours sincerely

Chris Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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