

Bristol Cathedral Choir School

College Square, Bristol BS1 5TS

Inspection dates 12–13 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The Principal provides outstanding leadership and a clear vision that gives everyone in the academy a strong sense of common purpose. He is supported well by other senior leaders and by the outstanding governing body.
- The ethos and culture of the academy are outstanding. Pupils from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds, faiths, beliefs and values come together in an exceptionally harmonious environment where all are respected, valued and supported to do well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It permeates all aspects of the life of the academy. The collective sense of moral purpose is powerful.
- The behaviour of pupils, and learners in the sixth form, and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. They make highly significant contributions to the ethos and culture of the academy.
- Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 11 is exceptional. It is outstanding in all aspects and for all groups of pupils. Achievement is good for learners in the sixth form and improving rapidly.
- The leadership of subject teaching, learning and assessment is very strong. Most teaching, learning and assessment in all subjects and year groups is outstanding, and none is less than good.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and of pupils' progress, by senior and subject leaders, is rigorous. It is very effective in driving continuous improvement.
- Heads of house play a vital role in checking the all-round personal development, welfare and well-being of each pupil.
- The support for individual and small groups of pupils is hugely impressive in quantity and quality, and highly effective.
- The curriculum provides a very good breadth and balance of subjects and experiences. It prepares pupils and sixth form learners well for their next steps.
- Pupils and sixth form learners are provided with a rich diet of high-quality experiences to broaden their personal development. The range and quality of musical activities are exceptional features of the academy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of any teaching, learning and assessment that is not yet at the very high standard expected in the academy, through senior and subject leaders ensuring that:
 - the written feedback that teachers give to pupils and to learners in the sixth form on their work always provides them with absolute clarity about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - all teachers check learning carefully during lessons to make sure that pupils and learners in the sixth form are doing as well as they can.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The academy is a great place to learn, develop and grow up. It takes in pupils from around 60 different primary schools, from a wide diversity of backgrounds, faiths, cultures, beliefs and values. It uses this diversity to create an ethos and culture that results in the incredibly harmonious community that is an absolute joy to experience.
- The manner in which everyone in the academy is valued, respected, listened to, encouraged, developed and kept safe is testament to the pupils themselves and to the outstanding leadership provided by the Principal. He has built a strong team of senior leaders with a good range of complementary skills so that they support him well. He is also supported and challenged extremely robustly by the outstanding governing body.
- Every pupil is known well by senior leaders and teachers. Each individual is supported and nurtured, with great sensitivity for their personal circumstances, so that they can thrive, enjoy their time in the academy and achieve exceptionally well.
- The academy has a strong team of middle leaders: subject leaders, heads of house, sixth form leaders and others. This means that the actions taken to improve the academy are deeply embedded at all levels and that these improvements are sustainable. There is a very secure platform for the further improvements the Principal and governors have planned.
- Senior leaders have a deep knowledge of all aspects of the academy. They know what is working well and what could be improved even further. The frequent and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and personal development is used highly effectively to drive improvement.
- Leaders take careful account of the views of parents and pupils. The academy council, a representative group of pupils, is very effective in bringing any concerns to the attention of the Principal and in making suggestions for improving aspects of the academy. They are not 'backward in coming forward' and are passionate about making sure that the academy meets their extremely demanding expectations.
- The Principal, supported by others, has worked effectively to deal with teaching that was not up to the high standard expected. He knows that there is still some that could be better. Teachers are supported well and given good training to help them improve. Subject leaders have demanding expectations and a clear view of what outstanding teaching in their subject should look like. They provide excellent leadership to ensure that all teaching reaches these very high demands. Many subject departments are involved in research to help staff to become even better subject teachers.
- The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is largely academic, but provides a good breadth and balance of subjects and experiences that prepare pupils well for their next steps. Senior leaders recognised that a small proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11 would benefit from a slightly different route and introduced a small number of vocational courses. This is working extremely effectively for these pupils and equips them very well for a range of post-16 options. The curriculum in the sixth form meets most learners' needs well.
- The academy provides an extensive range of enrichment experiences. Pupils and sixth form learners make full use of these opportunities. The range and quality of musical experiences and activities is exceptional, reflecting this specialist aspect of the academy's work.
- Leaders make very good use of additional funding and check the impact on pupils' achievement very carefully. Disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as others in the academy. The excellent provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is due to its outstanding leadership.
- The academy's culture places safety, as well as respect and valuing others, at its heart. A strong sense of keeping everyone safe and allowing everyone to thrive underpins the work of the academy. This means that the good work on combating extremism, challenging any unacceptable views and in avoiding radicalisation fits seamlessly into the life of the academy. Teachers are trained well and, for example, are astute in listening in to pupils' conversations to quickly detect anything potentially untoward.
- Academy leaders assiduously gather and consider the views of parents. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the academy to other parents.
- The Principal has maintained good relationships with the local authority and with headteachers in other schools in Bristol. For example, the academy takes in a number of pupils who are at risk of being permanently excluded from other schools. It has built a well-deserved reputation for being able to deal well with some extremely vulnerable young people.

■ The governance of the academy

- The governance of the academy is outstanding.
- Governors have a highly impressive depth of understanding of all aspects of the academy. They have an excellent breadth of skills and expertise that enables them to provide a highly effective balance of support and challenge to the academy's senior leaders. They have made a significant contribution to the ongoing improvements in the academy since the previous inspection.
- The support, guidance and direction provided by the governing body have helped the Principal and other senior leaders to build the excellent ethos and culture of the academy.
- The manner in which governors gather the views of pupils, for example by meeting the academy council prior to full governing body meetings, is highly impressive. It makes a significant contribution to their depth of understanding. They are also very well tuned to the needs of pupils, as shown, for example, in meeting a group of young carers to see what can be done to help and support them. They have a high level of awareness of the mental health concerns that affect young people and are relentless in ensuring that senior leaders keep a very close eye on this.
- Governors also have a deep understanding of how pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed. They fully comprehend how the academy keeps pupils safe and prepares them for life in modern Britain, including what needs to be done under the academy's 'Prevent' duties to combat extremist views and avoid radicalisation. They check carefully that teachers and other adults are thoroughly trained in all aspects of this duty.
- The governing body manages the academy's finances well and undertakes a careful analysis to ensure the effective use of all additional funding.
- Governors provide good oversight of the academy's management of the performance of teachers.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching, learning and assessment leads to the extremely impressive achievement of pupils.
- Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and think deeply about how to teach them well. Within each subject team, there is a very strong culture of constantly reviewing how they teach and keeping up to date with developments in their specialisms.
- Lessons are planned well. Teachers are clear about they expect pupils to learn and take good account of what pupils can already do. Teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement are very high and they challenge them to do as well as they can. They do not accept that 'good enough' is allowable.
- Academy leaders, and pupils and sixth form learners, value the range of different styles of teaching in the academy. Leaders have an absolute focus on ensuring that teaching, whatever form it takes, leads to pupils achieving as well as they can.
- In many lessons, teachers make excellent use of questioning to check and probe pupils' learning and deepen their understanding. Many teachers use this well to support those pupils at risk of falling behind and to further challenge those doing well. They make sure that as many pupils as possible are involved in ensuing discussions through commenting on and developing further other pupils' responses.
- Many lessons are enjoyable, including in the sixth form. It is obvious that pupils enjoy their learning and teachers enjoy teaching them.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils are mature and show mutual respect. There is a powerful culture in which pupils are encouraged to share their ideas without any fear of getting things wrong. Pupils' attitudes, support for each other and contributions when they are working in groups are exceptional. Pupils feel very safe and secure in classrooms and have immense trust in their teachers.
- Teachers make the most of opportunities to develop pupils' reading, writing, speaking and mathematical skills through their subject teaching. In many subjects, for example in mathematics and science, teachers challenge pupils to explain their thinking and reasoning. This develops their speaking and writing skills well and helps them to have a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Pupils make excellent use of specialist vocabulary in the vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers use accurate assessment information to ensure that parents have frequent updates on their children's progress and achievement. The academy's virtual learning environment (VLE) enables parents to monitor their child's ongoing progress on a frequent basis. There are also regular reports to parents.

- The quantity and quality of support for individual and small groups of pupils is hugely impressive. This support is not designed to compensate for any weaknesses in teaching, but to ensure that all pupils can do as well as they can and meet their potential. The large majority of pupils readily take up this extra support.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils have incredibly positive attitudes to their learning and want to do as well as they can, if not better. Consequently, they work really hard and achieve well even when the teaching is occasionally not as good as it could be.
- The academy has a good marking policy that is mostly used very well. In a small minority of cases it is not fully applied, so pupils are not provided with written feedback that gives them absolute clarity about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In a small number of lessons, teachers do not check the learning of all pupils during the lesson well enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils make a very strong contribution to the extremely harmonious and inclusive ethos and culture in the academy. They are invariably polite and respectful and value the diversity within the academy. They are articulate, thoughtful and caring.
- Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to their learning. They take pride in their work and in the academy. They readily involve themselves in order to make the most of the wide range of opportunities the academy provides to widen and deepen their experiences.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It permeates the life of the academy and underpins the respect pupils have for each other's faiths, beliefs, principles, values and cultures. Whenever possible, teachers find opportunities to support this development in their subject teaching. Teachers openly confront sensitive issues, such as those about sexuality that occur in English texts, and pupils respond in a very mature manner. An excellent discussion in a religious studies lesson explored the complex relationships and conflicts between philosophy, religion and science extremely well.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a clear sense of moral purpose. They have a deep understanding of their civic responsibility and the importance of mutual respect, promoting equality and valuing diversity.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they feel very safe in the academy, including when working with computers and other devices online. The academy is a complex mix of very old and new buildings. It is situated in a busy area in the centre of Bristol. Pupils are fully aware of possible risks and behave very sensibly. They have a well-developed understanding of how to maintain good health, including their mental health.
- Pupils are fully aware of all forms of bullying, which is extremely rare in the academy. However, they are confident about what to do and who to talk to should it ever happen.
- Academy leaders monitor all aspects of pupils' personal development, welfare and well-being very carefully and extremely well. The heads of house maintain a very good overview of the all-round development of each pupil. Older pupils keep a close eye on and support younger pupils well.
- Good careers guidance ensures that most pupils have knowledge of the range of possible post-16 programmes open to them, although many choose to stay in the sixth form. Senior leaders are taking steps to provide more complete and impartial guidance, including adopting a new information technology-based system.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Behaviour in all of the lessons observed was impeccable. Pupils are very positive about their learning, want to do well and behave accordingly. They are highly self-motivated and self-disciplined. They set and demand high standards of themselves.
- There is a strong sense of trust between pupils and teachers. This engenders the positive attitudes and mutual respect. As a result, many lessons are enjoyable for all concerned.
- Pupils also behave very well around the academy site, moving sensibly between the buildings and arriving at lessons on time and ready to learn. The refectory is a very crowded and busy place with lengthy

queuing, but pupils behave incredibly well and show great understanding of the need to be sensible and patient.

- Pupils value their education highly. The overwhelming majority rarely miss any days in the academy and are punctual to school. This is an achievement for some as their journeys to the academy start early and are not easy. A very small number of pupils are persistently absent, but in every case the actions staff have taken have led to improved attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils currently in the academy make outstanding progress from their starting points in almost all subjects, including in English and mathematics, and in all year groups. Their progress in other subjects is never less than good. The progress of all groups of pupils is equally impressive. As a result, the achievement of all groups of pupils is outstanding.
- The achievement of Year 11 pupils in 2015 was outstanding in all aspects, including in English and mathematics, and for all groups of pupils. The proportions of all groups of pupils achieving at a higher than nationally expected level was very high. Achievement was good for those in the sixth form and has improved for those currently in the academy.
- The academy's senior and subject leaders set very high expectations for the quality of work and achievement of all pupils, whatever their starting points. They are relentless in checking that pupils respond well to these high expectations and make at least the progress expected of them given their starting point. Many pupils often do much better than this. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education or training.
- Many pupils enter the academy at the start of Year 7 with high attainment. In all subjects, they are set challenging work in lessons and follow-up activities that ensures that they make very strong progress in all years. The most-able pupils rise to these challenges extremely well and respond with enthusiasm.
- The progress of each of the small number of pupils who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and supported by the pupil premium, is checked extremely carefully. The progress they make is at least as good as other pupils in the academy.
- The excellent provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensures that they all make very strong progress. Very high expectations are set for these pupils and they respond extremely well.
- Senior and subject leaders carry out frequent checks of pupils' progress. This means that any pupils at risk of falling behind are identified very quickly. The support that is then provided is swift and effective. As a result, very few fall behind for any length of time.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The quality of education provided for learners in the sixth form is good and improving rapidly as a result of outstanding leadership.
- The overall achievement of learners in 2015 was good, although in a small number of subjects, including English literature and history, it was outstanding. In a small number of subjects, the range of achievement of learners with similar starting points was too wide. This was the first cohort that entered the new academy in 2008.
- The academy's senior and sixth form leaders have dealt with weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment so that all is at least good and much is now outstanding. Learners currently in the sixth form are making better progress as a result. Learners with similar starting points are now making similar progress and many more are on track to meet their expected examination grades.
- Almost all learners starting each course successfully complete it. A good proportion of those who complete Year 12 progress to courses in Year 13. Those that leave at the end of Year 12 are given very helpful guidance and support to ensure that all transfer to, for example, a place in a further education college or to an apprenticeship.
- The monitoring of learners' progress is frequent and rigorous. Most teachers constantly check learning so that they can provide the support needed and quickly intervene if a learner is at risk of falling behind.
- Learners have high expectations and are strongly motivated to do well. They attend regularly and

typically turn up to lessons on time. They participate well in the wider life of the academy and make a significant contribution to its exceptional ethos and culture.

- Learners use their independent study time to prepare for lessons well and to complete any follow-up work. This means that many sixth form lessons are high-quality seminars, led well by the teacher, with excellent use of probing questioning to check on learning and to deepen understanding. The quality of work is often of a very high standard, as seen, for example, in art, chemistry, English literature, drama, mathematics, history and psychology.
- However, learners report that there is still some inconsistency in how well teaching fully involves them in the lesson. Occasionally, teachers do not make the best use of the time available in the lesson. Learners are given tasks that could have been completed as preparation for the lesson or as a follow-up activity. Senior and sixth form leaders are fully aware that the very best practice needs to become even more widespread.
- The academy provides a comparatively narrow academic curriculum, but one that meets the needs of most learners very well. As the sixth form develops further, leaders are considering a broadening of the range of subjects offered to enable, for example, some of those taking psychology to also take sociology. Existing links with other schools are being investigated as part of this process.
- To enter the sixth form, learners need to achieve five good GCSE grades and most have at least a grade C in English and mathematics. Those without English and/or mathematics have good provision to enable them to achieve at least a grade C as quickly as possible. There is some flexibility in this and sixth form leaders look carefully at each individual learner to determine the most suitable post-16 programme for them. Academy leaders are careful not to 'set any learners up to fail' by allowing them to start unsuitable courses.
- Sixth form learners are provided with a rich diet of additional activities to develop their personal, social and employability skills. Many are involved in mentoring and/or supporting younger pupils. The academy is involved in a pilot with the University of the West of England to provide a framework for the development of, and recognition for, these employability skills.
- All learners take part in work experience. This is effective in helping learners to prepare for their next steps or to explore a range of possible options to help make a decision about which university course or other route to follow.
- The combination of their academic programme, range of non-qualification activities and work experience is used well to ensure that each learner has a programme best suited to their needs and aspirations. As a result, all are prepared well for their next steps in higher education, training, employment or an apprenticeship.

School details

Unique reference number	135575
Local Authority	City of Bristol
Inspection Number	10003599

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	789
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Parsons
Principal	Mr Neil Blundell
Telephone number	0117 353 5000
Website	http://bccs.bristol.sch.uk/
Email address	principal@bristolcathedral.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 September 2010

Information about this school

- Bristol Cathedral Choir School opened as an academy sponsored by the Bristol Cathedral School Trust in September 2008. The Trust also sponsors the Cathedral Primary School on the same site. The previous school was an independent fee-paying school. The intake of pupils changed significantly from the opening of the new academy. The academy will transfer to a multi-academy trust, the Cathedral School Trust (CST), on 1 February 2016.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, but with a sixth form that is larger than is usual for a school of this size. A significant proportion of learners join the sixth form from other schools in the city and beyond.
- The pupil population is diverse. The academy takes pupils from around 60 primary schools, the vast majority from within a three-mile radius of the academy.
- A slightly higher than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups and this includes a very wide range of different groups. However, few speak English as an additional language. The academy has a distinctive Christian ethos, but welcomes pupils from all faiths and those with no faith.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- While the overall proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than average, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is much higher than average.

- The academy is committed to working with the local authority and with local headteachers to support vulnerable pupils, including those at risk of permanent exclusion from other secondary schools.
- In 2015, the academy met the government's current floor standards, the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11, and the current minimum standards for 16 to 19 learners.
- At the time of the inspection of the academy, no pupils were being educated off site in alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was converted from a one-day short inspection of a good school, being undertaken by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), to a two-day full inspection. On the second day, the two HMI were joined by three Ofsted Inspectors.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a wide range of subjects and for pupils of all ages. All of the observations were undertaken with senior or subject leaders. In lessons, inspectors looked at the teacher's information on pupils' or learners' current progress; they also looked at pupils' and learners' work and talked with them about it. Inspectors also looked at additional samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders, a head of house and other staff. Several meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and with other governors over both days of the inspection. Meetings were also held with groups of pupils in Year 7 and in Years 10 and 11, with a group of pupils supported by the pupil premium and with a group of Year 13 learners. Informal discussions were held with a wide range of pupils around the academy site during break and lunchtimes and at the changes between lessons.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and achievement, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about attendance, records of behaviour and safeguarding, and the academy leaders' analysis of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors considered the responses of 152 parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), 84 responses to the pupil online survey and 32 responses to the staff survey. They also considered the academy's analysis of its own pupil and parent surveys.

Inspection team

James Sage, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jerry Giles	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Gilson	Ofsted Inspector
Katherine Hooper	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

