

Inspection of Bristol Cathedral Choir School

College Square, Bristol BS1 5TS

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected six years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school motto 'gathered together that all may thrive' sits at the heart of the school's moral purpose. The words 'kindness, courage and hope' underpin it. Leaders ensure that every pupil remembers to show 'kindness' and 'courage' in what they do. The school regards itself as a beacon of 'hope' for the diverse pupil population. Staff strive for every pupil to succeed.

Leaders are diligent in making sure pupils are safe at the school. This is particularly important because of the school's unique location in the cloisters of Bristol Cathedral and the high proportion of vulnerable pupils. Parents and pupils speak highly of how pupils feel safe despite this.

Staff have very high expectations of pupils to which most respond. The school is a calm and orderly place as a result. Disruption to learning is rare. When it occurs, it is caused by a small number of pupils. Bullying is uncommon, but if it happens, staff deal with it swiftly.

High-quality music is a central feature in the school. Many leaders and pupils are expert in this field. They appear at cathedral events and also further afield. The music brings something special to parents and the community.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Trustees provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders. The headteacher has managed changes to the school effectively. He has made sure that staff's well-being and their curriculum knowledge are paramount. As a result, he leads a harmonious school. In their relationships with pupils, staff echo the respect and care that the headteacher shows. Pupils are ready for learning and engage well with teachers and other adults.

Leaders have established an ambitious school curriculum from Year 7 to the sixth form. Subject leaders have thought carefully and productively about what to teach and when. Leaders reflect regularly on what is best for pupils. They understand the importance of teaching pupils the knowledge that is critical to each subject. As a result, pupils' learning deepens over time. Leaders use assessment wisely without placing unnecessary burdens on staff. The number of pupils in key stage 4 who study the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate has risen steadily.

The school focuses closely on helping pupils to know specific-subject vocabulary. Teachers encourage pupils to explain their thinking which they do well. When pupils struggle, teachers ask questions skilfully to support pupils' answers. Many pupils analyse and write in-depth answers. However, some pupils in key stage 3 and 4 do not complete work adequately. Sometimes, teachers and subject leaders do not

check pupils' learning thoroughly enough. This means some pupils continue to produce incomplete and inaccurate work.

Staff work tirelessly to ensure every pupil understands the curriculum. They successfully include pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, many pupils enter the sixth form.

Reading for pleasure is a priority in key stage 3. Many pupils choose to read widely. Many subject leaders have added suitable texts to the curriculum, especially in the sixth form. A small number of pupils find reading difficult when they join the school in Year 7. Leaders provide these pupils with extra support. This enables them to read fluently.

Sixth-form students are exceptional role models for other pupils in the school. They help Year 11 pupils to study for their GCSEs. Sixth-form students participate in a wide range of clubs and activities, including music and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. They currently edit a school newspaper which they set up themselves.

The school provides pupils with high-quality pastoral support and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils display a strong commitment to fundamental British values. They particularly value the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance in their school. Pupils respect different religions. The clubs for different faiths develop pupils' understanding beyond their own. The school's music specialism contributes strongly to developing pupils' character and resilience. Pupils learn the importance of regular practice and gain confidence through performance. They increase their understanding of music of different genres and cultures.

Pupils receive appropriate careers information, education, advice and guidance from Year 7 onwards. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. Pupils know and understand potential career paths. The school has strong links with local, national and international institutions and companies.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular and up-to-date training. They know how to identify and report concerns about pupils who may be vulnerable. Leaders responsible for safeguarding make sure that external support is provided at the right level to keep pupils safe.

Checks on the suitability of new staff, during the recruitment process, are thorough.

The school has suitable policies in place to raise awareness among staff and parents about the dangers of sexual harassment and online risks. Pupils are aware of safeguarding risks to themselves.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers and subject leaders do not check pupils' learning thoroughly enough. As a result, some pupils continue to make errors or do not complete work. Subject leaders need to ensure that checks on learning consistently help pupils to learn more and improve the accuracy of their work.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135575
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10240549
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1172
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	434
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Parsons
Headteacher	Joseph Thurston
Website	bccs.bristol.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 September 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pupils attend five registered alternative providers and one unregistered provider.
- The school is a Church of England school in the diocese of Bristol. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in February 2021.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer, the chair of the trust, the trust's school improvement partner, the two vice-chairs of governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector had a telephone call with an external school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, music, geography and history.
- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record and discussed case studies of vulnerable pupils with the designated safeguarding leaders. They spoke to staff and pupils about the training and education they had received about keeping safe.
- Inspectors took account of the Ofsted survey, Parent View, and the results of the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Lees	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Wring	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector

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 children looked after, 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 <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022