



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**POLWHELE HOUSE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Polwhele House

Full Name of School	<b>Polwhele House</b>
DfE Number	<b>908/6076</b>
Address	<b>Polwhele House Newquay Road Truro Cornwall TR4 9AE</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01872 273011</b>
Fax Number	<b>01872 273011</b>
Email Address	<b>office@polwhelehouse.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Alex McCullough</b>
Proprietors	<b>Canon Richard Ian White MBE and Mrs Rosemary Anne White</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>102</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (69 boys; 33 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>3-5(EYFS): 19    11-18: 20 5-11: 63</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total: 96</b>
Number of Boarders	<b>Total: 6</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Victoria Farrow</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>25 Sep 2012 to 28 Sep 2012</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in September 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report,

inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Diane Gardiner

Mr Andrew Rowley

Mrs Carol Evans

Mrs Lynda Boden

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, ISA School)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Polwhele House is a proprietorial, co-educational day and boarding preparatory and pre-preparatory school for pupils between the ages of three and thirteen years. Founded in Truro in 1976 as Boscawen Rose School for pupils from the age of three to eight, the school moved to its present site in 1981 when it extended the age range to thirteen years. In 1983, it became the school at which the Truro Cathedral choristers are educated.
- 1.2 The school is based around a historic manor house in 32 acres of garden, playing fields, park and woodland on the outskirts of Truro. The school aims to provide a friendly, stimulating and caring environment where every pupil feels valued and involved, by offering a thorough and appropriate academic education, enabling children to achieve their potential. The school seeks to provide a broad range of opportunity for pupils to discover areas of activity in which they can excel or take pleasure. In addition, it aims to foster strong moral values within a Christian framework and equip pupils in the broadest sense for the next stage of their education.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 102 pupils of whom 69 were boys and 33 were girls. Forty pupils were in the pre-prep, for pupils from the age of three to seven. Six boys are accommodated within the main school building as occasional boarders; there are no weekly boarders.
- 1.4 Entry at the age of three or four follows a 'taster day' and is based on date of registration. At the age of seven and above, pupils entering the school are assessed and may sit a school test appropriate to their age. Pupils are drawn mainly from the area local to the school and come from a variety of social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Scholarships to the school are available annually. On leaving, most pupils transfer to selective independent schools with a number gaining awards and a few completing their education in maintained schools.
- 1.5 Of the sixteen pupils identified as requiring support with their learning, all receive specialist help. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.6 The results of national tests show pupils' average ability is just above that of the national average with some classes where the ability profile is quite wide.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims and offers pupils an excellent educational experience. From the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) onwards, their achievement is excellent, both in academic and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils make rapid progress in relation to their abilities as a result of the excellent creative teaching they receive, which encourages them to develop their reasoning skills and become highly independent. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make excellent progress as a result of individualised and, where appropriate, specialist teaching. Pupils' achievements are extremely well supported by the breadth of curriculum provision and the range of extra-curricular activities and trips.
- 2.2 The personal development of both day and boarding pupils is excellent, and from the EYFS onwards is well supported by excellent pastoral care and welfare, health and safety arrangements, which ensure that pupils are safeguarded well. In the EYFS, staff promote and support the standard of behaviour expected and give priority to children's happiness, health and safety, encouraging them to form strong relationships with each other and with adults, thus developing their independence. Their spiritual development is outstanding and they have a strong awareness of moral issues. They display a mature sense of social responsibility and their cultural development is strong. Pupils of all ages demonstrate a high level of mutual respect and support for each other and the whole school community. They relish the prospect of taking on responsibility and feel that they can make a genuine contribution to the school. The excellent provision strongly supports the boarders' personal development and sense of well-being. Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent. The proprietors and managing council are highly committed to the school's success and have a clear vision for its future development. Their effective oversight is robust and managed through an appropriate range of sub-committees and regular attendance at the school. All members of the managing council are aware of their responsibilities in relation to regulatory matters, ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. The quality of leadership and management is excellent throughout the school. Strong links have been forged with the overwhelmingly supportive parents. Pupils' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that they are happy, feel that their voice is mostly heard and are proud of their school. The senior management team has made excellent progress with the recommendations of the previous report. Middle leaders' roles have been strengthened and developed, curriculum planning has been made more cohesive, ensuring strong links across the year groups, and a new framework for assessment has been introduced; although the school is yet to fully develop the analysis of this high quality data to ensure the best progress for every child. The improvement in access to and use of information and communication technology (ICT) has strengthened the pupils' ability to research and develop reasoned cases for their opinions, particularly through challenge to the most able children.



## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

1. Ensure that end of year reports contain a sharper focus on targets for the future.
2. Develop the analysis of the high quality assessment data available to ensure maximum progress for every pupil.
3. Provide training for key staff in administration of controlled medicines to enhance future practice.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The pupils' success in academic work and the wider curriculum fulfils the school's aims by offering an education where children are given the opportunities to achieve their potential. Throughout, including in the EYFS, pupils display high levels of knowledge, understanding, and advanced subject skills. From the earliest age, children are encouraged to be active learners who learn to be independent through exploration, critical thinking and creativity. In the EYFS for example, Reception children successfully accessed a phonics language programme, confidently using the computer. The recently redeveloped curriculum is broad and pupils have an exceptionally focused approach towards their learning which they are able to sustain throughout lessons. The aims of the school for pupils to discover areas of activity in which they can excel or take pleasure, are fully met through an increasingly expanding extra-curricular programme, including regular sporting and drama opportunities, alongside outstanding opportunities in music.
- 3.3 Throughout the school, pupils are articulate and composed, displaying very high speaking and listening skills. An established feature of the lessons is that pupils regularly enjoy the challenge of thinking deeply and reasoning with each other, the teacher and with set tasks. From this, they are able to put together a strong case to support their own thoughts as well as to respectfully question others, including the teacher if required.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment is assessed using internal procedures and also external testing programmes, which identify the pupils' ability to be, on average, just above national average ability. Inspection evidence based on observations of lessons, scrutiny of work and discussions with individual pupils indicates that pupils make very good progress in relation to their ability. More detailed analysis and use of assessment results is a developing strategy within the school with the aim of tracking each pupil's achievement and progress more closely.
- 3.5 Less able pupils and those with SEND make very good progress in relation to their starting points because they are extremely well supported by high quality, differentiated teaching. Where required, they benefit from individual lessons with the SENCO. Highly effective planning and differentiated tasks prove most effective in embracing and supporting these learners and, where required, the school provides training for staff and consults with external specialists. Due to the small class sizes planning can often be extremely specific and personalised. Inspired by the teaching, gifted and talented pupils tackle, with relish, the more challenging tasks which are integral to lessons, taking pride in the high levels of success they achieve.
- 3.6 Pupils are successful in a particularly wide range of activities, and these achievements make a considerable contribution to their personal development, enabling them to demonstrate their individual confidence, team skills and respect for each other. Pupils from the EYFS onwards regularly perform in assemblies and lunchtime concerts and gain much from this experience. Pupils are highly motivated and skilled in creative subjects such as art and design, music and drama. Many pupils learn musical instruments, and take part in school concerts and all pupils take part in annual drama productions. They are very successful in examinations in

music, with choristers regularly achieving Grade 8 in singing and Grade 5 in music theory before they leave school at age 13.

- 3.7 Pupils' success in team sports comes through their competitive results against other schools and a range of inter-school sporting fixtures. Pupils regularly compete in national swimming and athletics competitions, reaching a very high standard of performance.
- 3.8 Positions of responsibility, such as the school council, head pupils, captains of sport and prefects are highly prized and respected and those in these positions show maturity and composure. All pupils have very positive attitudes to their school, staff and also their lessons and activities. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary; thanking the teacher at the end of the lesson is a most regular occurrence.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.9 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The broad curriculum is highly stimulating and strongly supports the development of pupils' individual talents, skills and personal qualities, in line with the school's aims. It facilitates the attainment of high standards and also contributes to pupils' academic, creative, aesthetic and physical development. Time is appropriately distributed between curriculum subjects. Pupils' linguistic skills benefit from learning French throughout the school and German from Year 7. Outdoor learning is a significant element of the curriculum and adds much to the pupils' personal and physical development, particularly in the EYFS where a wide range of interesting outdoor activities promote enthusiasm enabling the children to respond well to the high expectations of the staff, leading to successful outcomes for all children. The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend.
- 3.11 Since the last inspection documentation supporting curriculum planning has improved significantly and now provides good links across the year groups and subject areas, providing a consistency of approach. Monitoring of the curriculum is carefully managed. This helps to ensure high standards of teaching, appropriate challenge, the quality of pupils' presentation of work and also thoughtful marking which supports the pupils' next stage of learning. Pupils with SEND are supported well across the curriculum, mainly within lessons, and where appropriate individual education plans are carefully designed to help pupils make maximum progress. Pupils who are gifted and talented are identified and appropriately challenged to develop their skills through careful and targeted differentiation within the small classes.
- 3.12 Since the last inspection the school has considerably developed the provision and use of ICT. All classrooms are now equipped with either interactive whiteboards or projectors which are used effectively by staff and children. ICT teaching is now integrated into the curriculum across all subject areas, which supports the pupils' learning in a more cohesive way. On-line resources in all subjects and at all ages are used enthusiastically by pupils to consolidate their learning and extend the most able through various levels of challenge. Children in the EYFS confidently use the interactive whiteboard and program a robot to move around a grid.
- 3.13 The academic curriculum is significantly enhanced by a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities and school trips including the biennial trip to France for Year 7 and 8. In addition, the school makes the most of a host of enrichment

opportunities available in the local area with the intention of broadening pupils' horizons. Parents or other members of the local community are regularly invited to share their special skills and expertise in assemblies or in lessons.

- 3.14 Sport, art, and drama are strengths of the school. Opportunities for pupils to join clubs relating to these subjects are considerable; a large number participate in clubs daily. For example, pupils can be creative in sculpture or needlecraft clubs and extend their artistic skills. The after-school sports programme includes cross country, netball, hockey, rugby, sailing and karate. Life skills are developed through opportunities to cook, garden and join the pioneers who are clearing the old Victorian lakes. Music at Polwhele is outstanding in all respects and the opportunities afforded to the cathedral choristers are wide ranging including an annual opportunity to sing for BBC Radio 3 and record a CD. All pupils benefit from the close links with the cathedral and the opportunities it provides. Every day spirits are lifted as the staff and children are treated to the wonderful sound of the choristers rehearsing.
- 3.15 A well-structured personal, social, health and citizenship education programme encourages pupils to gain understanding about themselves and other people in the wider world.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.16 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 High-quality teaching successfully promotes the school's aim to offer a thorough and appropriate academic education, enabling children to achieve their potential.
- 3.18 A wide range of teaching methods is employed and alongside thorough planning, in almost all lessons, pupils are given opportunities to work in groups, independently and take ownership of their learning; they tackle this challenge with enthusiasm and confidence, achieving impressive results. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and is having a rewarding impact on the pupils' approach to learning and associated standards of achievement. Small class sizes ensure that the teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. In the EYFS the excellent identification of individual needs, the efficient use of information gathered from continuous assessments and high-quality individual attention, ensure that all children are supported effectively and make rapid progress. Through skilled differentiated questioning, pupils respond enthusiastically and enjoy the challenge of debate, higher level thinking and reasoning. This contributes greatly to the progress that pupils make across the ability range and for pupils with SEND. Trust and respect between pupils and staff enable the teachers to be creative and imaginative in their varied approach to the teaching of a new task and this is very appealing to the pupils. A Year 1 Science lesson on senses was memorable for the pupils as they had the opportunity to challenge their taste buds on a range of different flavoured crisps.
- 3.19 Since the last inspection, a new and more effectively balanced timetable has been introduced along with an annual whole-school programme of assessment; this is well structured and ensures that the pupils' attainment is regularly checked in order to identify progress of all pupils in relation to their personal short- and long-term targets. The analysis and use of the high quality assessment data now available to the school is in its infancy and is not yet fully targeted to ensure maximum progress

for every pupil in relation to their starting points, for example for some more able pupils.

- 3.20 Praise is omnipresent in lessons and 'Set points' are well regarded as recognition of very good work; excellence is rewarded by pupils being cited on the commendations board for special achievement in any aspect of school life. Marking is clear and follows the school policy. Teachers enjoy a degree of personalisation as part of the policy and pupils understand and respond extremely positively to their teachers' comments and the feedback on how to improve.
- 3.21 Teachers share with pupils the learning objectives for each lesson and, through a range of differentiated strategies, support all pupils in achieving them. Teaching has excellent pace and is supported by a range of resources, including extra staffing in lessons, small individual whiteboards, interactive whiteboards, the library and ICT suite. These factors have a most positive impact on the rate of the pupils' learning.
- 3.22 From Year 5, pupils benefit from increasing amounts of specialist teaching in English, mathematics, art, music, physical education, French, history, geography, religious education and science. The new lesson structure and an inventive timetable for the teaching of ICT through a range of time-tabled subjects are proving popular with the pupils who instinctively value ICT as an additional tool for their learning.
- 3.23 Imaginative and varied approaches to teaching ensure that the school day is a richly contrasting programme of learning opportunities for all pupils. Classroom behaviour and atmospheres are exemplary and in line with the school aims. Pupils speak most highly of how much they enjoy their lessons and learning, how valued they feel and of the respect they have for their teachers.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school is highly successful in providing a friendly, stimulating and caring environment where every pupil feels valued and involved in accordance with its aims.
- 4.3 The pupils develop an excellent spiritual awareness, for this is an integral part of daily life at the school. Across the whole age range pupils are confident, reflective and have well-developed self-esteem, because caring staff give their time freely to both support them within the school environment and afford them the opportunities to visit areas of outstanding natural beauty all easily accessible within the area. Commendation assemblies each week provide opportunities for all pupils to have their work acknowledged thus developing their sense of self-worth. Many pupils have a strong sense of sensitivity and express awe and wonder at the result of a science experiment or watch, with a mature sense of concentration, images of life in the trenches in World War Two. Strong links with the cathedral through the choristers build an excellent knowledge and awareness of the spiritual elements of life as daily choir rehearsals lift the spirits of both pupils and staff. Children leave the EYFS with excellent personal qualities that provide them with a strong foundation for the future.
- 4.4 The moral development of the pupils is excellent. The Polwhele House family ethos supports the pupils in developing strong relationships through which they care for and support each other and listen carefully to and value the ideas and opinions of their peers and their teachers. They demonstrate a mature empathy for the needs of others, such as in a geography lesson where they discussed the positive and negative effects of tourism on the local community. From the Nursery onwards pupils develop a strong awareness of right and wrong, understanding why rules are necessary within a community and are willing to work within them.
- 4.5 Pupils show excellent social awareness; they are engaging, courteous and socially adept. Older pupils enjoy the responsibility of acting as 'study buddies', hearing the children in the pre-prep read three times a week. The prefects carry out their duties fairly and are well respected and valued within the school community. Opportunities to exercise responsibility occur throughout the age range and members of the school council are confident that their opinions are heard and acted upon. Pupils are involved at every level in opportunities to raise funds to support a number of local, national and international charities, such as providing shelter for disasters around the world and to support the local food bank at harvest time. All pupils have an appropriate knowledge of UK public services and institutions.
- 4.6 The pupils' cultural development is strong. They have a good understanding of European culture which is enhanced by external visits to museums and by visitors to the school. They are culturally enriched through excellent opportunities to develop their abilities in the performing arts, particularly musical ones. Pupils develop an understanding of the diversity of different cultures. They are introduced to world faiths and develop an appreciation of the beliefs of others. Residential trips to France for Years 7 and 8 enable pupils to gain valuable first-hand experience of the language and culture of another country.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 In all sections of the school the clear ethos promotes excellent behaviour, generosity of spirit, a co-operative atmosphere and strong shared values. The relationships between teachers, tutors and pupils are excellent. In the EYFS the key persons model promotes and supports the expected standards of behaviour and gives priority to the children's happiness, health and safety so that they feel safe, form strong relationships with one another and adults and develop their independence. At all levels the staff are supportive of pupils' needs and ambitions, and nurture and encourage them in their personal and academic goals. Pupils are very appreciative of the time and help given by staff, speaking of them with affection and warmth. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary and mutual respect between staff and pupils is obvious. Bullying is not tolerated; pupils know that inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- 4.9 The excellent identification of individual needs, the efficient use of information gathered from continuous assessments and high-quality individual attention, ensure that all children are supported effectively and make rapid progress from the EYFS onwards. Pupils with special educational needs are supported individually by experienced, qualified staff and also benefit from small class sizes. Communication throughout the school is facilitated by the good relationship between staff and line managers. The senior management team has successfully co-ordinated all aspects of school life to the pupils' advantage.
- 4.10 The chef provides healthy meals for all pupils, locally sourced, with vegetables from the school garden, and caters for pupils with special dietary needs, religious, cultural and medical. There is always a vegetarian option and individual meals are cooked for one pupil. The chef provides a varied menu of food pupils like, but introduces innovative food once a week. Physical exercise is promoted through a broad range of opportunities and all children are encouraged to understand its importance in staying healthy.
- 4.11 Pupils are confident that their views are heard and acted upon. There is a very proactive school council. Pupils are elected from each year group and meet regularly with the head and deputy head. Pupils say that anything they suggest is likely to be agreed, unless it is unreasonable. There are suggestions boxes in each classroom and two suggestions from each are discussed at meetings.

#### **4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.12 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 The school has strong policies and procedures from the EYFS onwards to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and is committed to providing a safe environment for all. Members of the senior management team have received external training in safer recruitment and safeguarding to ensure pupils' safety. All staff, including peripatetic teachers and volunteers, receive child protection training every three years and new staff receive it during induction. All staff sign to say they have read and understood the child protection policy.
- 4.14 Pupils are protected from fire by rigorous checking of fire appliances by school staff and annual servicing by an external contractor. Pupils have regular fire drills, in school time and boarding time. The school also uses external suppliers for electrical

work and gas installations. Testing for Legionella is carried out within school. Being close to the sea, the school recognises the need to ensure that the children are well aware of the need to keep safe in beach areas, and during the inspection the visit of the lifeboat team enhanced this in a fun and practical way.

- 4.15 The health and safety committee meets termly, and all staff know to report any issue, which will be dealt with promptly. A complete tour of the school and grounds is carried out annually by the bursar. Risk assessments of all areas of the school and for all activities are kept, reviewed annually and monitored by the head. There are CCTV cameras focused on key access areas to buildings, for use should an incident take place.
- 4.16 Provision for pupils who become ill or are injured is comfortable and ensures that pupils are safe and well looked after until they can be collected by their parents. An appropriate number of staff are trained in paediatric first aid and there are signs throughout the school explaining where the nearest first aid box is situated.
- 4.17 The admission and attendance records are correctly administered and stored for three years. The school has good contact with local welfare agencies. From the earliest age, pupils are taught how to manage risk and how to keep themselves safe.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.19 Boarding now takes place once a week, with the exception of 'taster' nights. Six boarders, including one chorister, stay in school on Tuesday night. The school is holding a series of taster nights to promote the idea of boarding amongst the younger children. Both boarders and parents have expressed a wish for boarding to continue and expand.
- 4.20 The boarding experience enhances boarders' lives and they are very mature for their age. They flourish in an atmosphere where courtesy and kindness is the norm, where staff have a light touch and give ready support and praise. They are allowed to be children, to play, have fun and get dirty. They are happy, exuberant, self-reliant and confident. They are also thoughtful, tolerant and have integrity. Their manners are impeccable. They get on well with each other, are welcoming to strangers, and comfortable with adults. Living in a house in a pastoral setting, where beautiful music is a constant, is an additional enhancement. Boarders are very positive about boarding and the Year 8 pupils commented that they were sad at the thought of leaving.
- 4.21 Boarders value their time in school, enjoy being part of the boarding community, and participate fully in the life of the school, be it through supporting charities, playing sports, singing or building a dam. They have excellent relationships with the house staff, eating with them at breakfast and dinner in a family atmosphere, playing energetic games with them after supper and seeking comfort, support and help from them when needed.
- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent.
- 4.23 Boarders are very well cared for by the boarding staff, who are highly experienced. There is a high level of staffing and support. The head and deputy effectively link the pastoral and academic life of the boarders, whilst the housemother helps in the pre-prep and the gap student is the choral scholar. There are policies in place to



promote boarders' health and safety. Staff provide first aid and medical care for them when ill, until parents collect them. Boarders are protected by effective procedures for their personal safety and say that they feel safe. They have been provided with lockable space for their possessions. Boarders named a number of staff they can turn to if they have a problem. The housemother cooks a 'superb' breakfast and supper for the boarders and house staff. Boarders have a detailed induction, including fire drill information, and have older boarders to help them settle in.

- 4.24 The boarding accommodation is welcoming and comfortable, clean, warm and light. There are small dormitories for girls and boys, with cheerful décor and bedding. Mattresses are comfortable and boarders can personalise their bed space. The bathroom facilities are attractive, with effective showers. The television room/common room is comfortable, with sofas and bean bags, games and dvds. Boarders have access to television, newspapers, magazines and the internet. They are able to contact parents by telephone or email and can obtain personal requisites and stationery in school.
- 4.25 Boarders have access to a wide range of activities after school and after supper. They can play energetic games outside or in the sports hall. They can use the computer room and the library, watch television or choose from a good selection of games, and puzzles. House staff are always around to supervise and join in the fun. The school fosters good relationships with parents and is in regular contact with them about their children.
- 4.26 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent.
- 4.27 The responsibility for the welfare and safeguarding of the choristers is shared with the cathedral staff. The cathedral staff are checked through the Criminal Records Bureau and receive child protection training and the school is confident of arrangements made by the cathedral for choristers' trips. Checks made by the school when cathedral staff change ensures the continued safety of the boarders. Only one chorister boards at present.
- 4.28 The school fully complies with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding. Senior staff have received training in safer recruitment and safeguarding to ensure boarders' safety. The head monitors all the records and policies, though they are not signed off at present. All staff, including peripatetic teachers and volunteers, receive child protection training and sign to say they understand the procedures and it is part of induction for new staff.
- 4.29 Boarders are cared for when ill. The housemother has extended training in first aid and but does not have training in the administration of controlled medicines. There are effective policies and procedures in place to prevent bullying and promote positive behaviour and relationships. Boarders know that bullying will not be tolerated and that any incident will be dealt with quickly and effectively. They know who to turn to with problems but only one knew about the independent listener and none knew her role.
- 4.30 The behaviour of the boarders is excellent. They are courteous, polite and friendly, automatically opening doors, smiling and responding helpfully to any request. They have good relationships across the age groups and genders and between boarders and staff.

- 4.31 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding is excellent. Boarding is led by the headmaster with the support of a housemother, a choral scholar and the deputy head. All are experienced in the care of children and are committed to the welfare and happiness of the boarders and to the boarding experience. The knowledge and care of the boarders is exceptional. Staff are aware of the boarders' strengths and areas which need nurture and development. The atmosphere is relaxed and happy and boarders respond to the praise and understand the need for rules and routines. The relationship between boarders and staff is excellent. Effective policies and procedures are in place and appropriate records are held.
- 4.32 The school has a clear long-term plan to increase numbers and considerable effort is being put in by the leadership to this end. Boarders said that they would like more boarding and parents wish it to continue. The boarders and parents questionnaires showed overwhelming satisfaction with the school and the boarding experience.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The proprietors and managing council are highly committed to the success of the school and its aims and have a clear vision for the future. The managing council has a broad range of professional expertise and an appropriate range of sub-committees effectively address all areas of school life. Regular reports from the committees, and weekly reports from all staff meetings, including the EYFS, enable the proprietors to have a secure understanding of issues relating to performance and standards throughout the school. An efficient structure of formal and informal communication between staff, senior management, and the proprietors ensures that the long-term vision for the school and the annual improvement plan are reviewed regularly, as suggested at the last inspection.
- 5.3 The proprietors and other members of the managing council visit the school on a regular basis, providing strong support in all related matters. Subject co-ordinators present their plans for the future of their particular areas of responsibility in rotation and council members undertake supportive classroom observations resulting in an environment in which there is an atmosphere of mutual respect at all levels.
- 5.4 Close liaison with the bursar, administrative team and staff through the senior management team ensures that the high levels of quality staffing, accommodation and resourcing are maintained and regularly reviewed.
- 5.5 From the EYFS onwards the proprietors and managing council take their responsibilities seriously and undertake a range of induction and training including safer recruitment, welfare, health and safety and awareness of child abuse. In addition they also take advice from the school's associations and other external specialists in order to ensure that all areas of responsibility are secure and up to date. A clear cycle of review of all policies, particularly those relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school, ensures that any weaknesses can be addressed.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 Since the last inspection the senior management team has successfully created an ethos and sense of purpose that have greatly improved the quality of teaching and learning and personal development and pastoral care fully in line with the school's aims. All members of the group are efficient and approachable and most effective in developing the broad range of opportunities on offer to ensure that every pupil is able to discover areas of activity in which they can excel, take pleasure and reach their potential. At all levels of responsibility, the leadership and management of the school are effective with regard to their delegated responsibilities. Since the last inspection the senior management team has worked in a highly focused way to introduce new assessment procedures, raise expectations in all areas and start the process of analysing the excellent assessment data now available to ensure

progress for all children, including those with SEND and those who are gifted and talented. The senior management team is aware that this is still in the early stages of development. Levels of challenge are now high for every child, including those within the EYFS setting, ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

- 5.8 Throughout the school, leadership is focused on self-evaluation, setting priorities and ensuring that they are achieved. The whole-school development plan is the result of wide consultation; staff in all sections of the school are able to make their views known and contribute to policy and practice ensuring that there is an ambitious programme in place for improvement. The staff appraisal system further monitors teaching and learning and ensures that training needs are identified and priorities for professional development set. New, highly qualified staff, appointed since the last inspection have strengthened the opportunities for specialist teaching across the school.
- 5.9 The previous inspection report made recommendations to strengthen the role and expectation of middle managers. In response the role of the subject co-ordinators has been strengthened and the sharing of good practice across the age range, including in the EYFS, has greatly improved the opportunities available for all children, for example in the area of problem-solving in mathematics and in the development of cross-curricular teaching throughout the school. The enthusiasm and dedication of the staff ensure a sense of purpose and vision.
- 5.10 Systems for pastoral care and welfare, health and safety are developed effectively, including those affecting boarders and the EYFS. All appointments of staff and volunteers are now carefully monitored and the necessary checks recorded in the central register and individual files. All staff are suitably trained in their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. From the earliest stages in the EYFS the accommodation is maintained in a safe, bright and welcoming way which provides the children with ample resources and a stimulating environment in which to grow and thrive.
- 5.11 Links with parents are excellent. From the EYFS onwards the school greatly values its partnerships with parents and operates an open door policy to develop a close bond between home and school. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed their complete satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children. In particular they commented on the warmth of the staff and the caring environment which the school provides for both parents and pupils.
- 5.12 Good quality information, including all required policies, is provided to parents of current and prospective pupils through a very useful website. Regular newsletters bring all members of the community up to date with recent events, success and plans for the future. Opportunities to communicate with the school are numerous and regular email contact and the newly introduced Twitter account are valuable means of effective and rapid communication.
- 5.13 Parents are pleased with the opportunities they are given to become involved in the life and work of the school and the ease with which they can approach the headmaster and staff to ensure that any queries are dealt with in a timely manner. The school has an appropriate complaints policy and when concerns are raised they are taken seriously. A parent liaison representative reports to key members of the managing council before every meeting ensuring that parents have a direct line of communication with the proprietors. Regular parent information evenings on

curriculum or other matters ensure that they feel informed and included. The energetic Polwhele House Society organises events to provide parents with opportunities to meet up socially, to raise funds for the benefit of the pupils as well as for a wide range of local, national and international charities.

- 5.14 Information about pupils' academic achievement and progress, as well as their personal development, is well reported through detailed and full reports at the end of each year, however these do not always contain sufficient information to inform parents of appropriate targets for the coming year. Effort and achievement profiles are provided for parents three times a term for Years 3 to 8. These reports are supplemented by parent-teacher meetings in the Michaelmas and Lent Terms. Parents are particularly well supported in their choice of senior schools. Individual appointments are arranged with the headmaster who ensures that parents have all the information they need to make an informed choice.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**