

School inspection report

23 to 25 April 2024

Chetham's School of Music

Long Millgate

Manchester

M3 1SB

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The school is a specialist music school which aims to provide as broad and balanced an academic curriculum as possible within the constraints of its specialism. Pupils are admitted to the school on the basis of their potential to develop musicianship to a high standard. Pupils' academic abilities on entry to the school vary and admission is dependent on an audition which does not specify an expectation of formal musical qualification.
2. Leaders ensure that the school provides effective education for pupils at each stage of their learning, both academically and musically. Pupils make good progress from their starting points and pupil achievement is high in both main aspects of their learning. Pupils' positive outcomes are enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, musical and otherwise. Boarding provision supports pupils' accomplishments well. By the time pupils are ready to leave the school, they are well-qualified in musicianship and academic subjects, and well-prepared personally for their next steps and future challenges. Pupils have an assured basis to proceed to higher education or employment in music or an alternative direction.
3. The successful implementation of a balanced curriculum, supported by effective careers advice and guidance, provides pupils with realistic opportunities to fulfil their optional future aspirations and is a significant strength of the school.
4. Leaders and governors work effectively to plan for strategic school improvement and to monitor and evaluate the impact of current school practice. Leaders are currently addressing the need to ensure a more suitable balance between academic learning and music tuition for pupils in the lower school. Although teachers in the lower school know pupils well, procedures for tracking their progress are not fully embedded.
5. Governors provide suitably rigorous challenge to senior leaders and appropriate support. Leaders inspire a culture of trust, respect and aspiration within the school community. They achieve this through their explicitly expressed respect for pupils' endeavours and ensuring that British values are promoted in all aspects of school life.
6. Leaders ensure that pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society is fully embedded in the curriculum. This reflects both the school's specialism and its commitment to prepare pupils effectively for their next steps in education or employment.
7. Leaders are thorough in their identification of potential risks to pupil wellbeing. Leaders ensure the effective implementation of the safeguarding policy. Staff fully understand what is required of them in order to safeguard pupils and safeguarding leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in academic subjects in the lower school is tracked effectively
- the curriculum in the lower school is suitably balanced between academic and music provision.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. The joint principals, one with an academic curriculum oversight and operational school role, and the other with responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the music curriculum, work together effectively in close liaison. They consider the strategic development of the school, self-evaluating how well the school's aims are being fulfilled and accurately identify next steps in the school's continual improvement. For example, they have focused recently on the effectiveness of provision in the lower school and appropriately identified that music tuition sometimes impacts on the pupils' engagement with academic subject learning.
9. The experienced and knowledgeable senior leadership team assist the principals in fulfilling their responsibilities, particularly in ensuring the welfare, wellbeing and safety of pupils. They coordinate regular reviews with staff regarding pupils' progress and achievement and personal development. Leaders work closely with other members of the school team to monitor how well pupils are coping with their busy timetables and to steer extra support to pupils when this is required. Boarding and day staff work in close collaboration to encourage and enthuse pupils' involvement in all aspects of school life. Senior and middle leaders provide effective pastoral oversight of pupils through personal tutor arrangements and through the use of caring communication about pupils, formally and informally.
10. Leaders actively promote British values, trust and respect, including respect for all groups of people. A suitable and effectively implemented accessibility plan is in place and the school is able to accommodate pupils who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The school reports to the local authority regarding the required sharing of financial information in relation to funding for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
11. The board of governors comprises experienced members who monitor leaders' effectiveness closely through its committee and governing body meetings. The independent safeguarding commission, inaugurated by governors to oversee and challenge practice, provides robust scrutiny.
12. Leaders and managers produce a comprehensive range of risk assessments covering areas of school life which are considered and overseen by Governors. Governors and leaders ensure that policies are kept up to date, are implemented effectively, and comply with legislation.
13. Leaders review and check that the required information is made available to parents and other interested parties. This information includes the school's up-to-date safeguarding policy and relationships and sex education policies. Complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and in line with the school's complaints policy. Links with other agencies to promote and benefit the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders, are effective and are routinely evaluated by leaders.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders ensure that expert, specialist music tuition, together with structured programmes of instrumental and choral practice, ensembles, concert and public performance enable pupils to achieve highly accomplished outcomes in music. Leaders ensure that pupils give sufficient focus to studying subjects other than music through a broad curriculum, implemented by teachers who have good subject knowledge. Music tutors and teachers liaise closely to assist pupils in keeping up with the demands of their studies by giving additional support whenever it is required. This results in pupils achieving well academically as well as musically. Boarding staff play an effective role in further supporting boarders in maintaining a balance in their music and academic work as well as in non-musical extra-curricular activities. Leaders and staff know individual pupils well and work together effectively to promote pupils' best outcomes all-round. In turn, pupils know they are valued, and feel well-supported.
16. As a result of the well-developed curricular provision and its effective implementation, pupils are supported to reach their potential, musically and academically. There is effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). This is provided by the 'compensatory education department' which assists individual pupils and small groups of pupils on a withdrawal from class basis and also advises teachers regarding adjustments to be made in lessons. As a result, pupils are supported to overcome any barriers to learning they may be experiencing and are enabled to make good progress from their starting points.
17. Leaders support pupils to achieve results of a high standard so that leavers are in a strong position to successfully pursue their higher education and careers in either music or other directions. The very large majority of pupils achieve highest grades at GCSE and A level and results in music qualifications are of a high standard. Almost all leavers from the sixth form are successful in gaining a place at prestigious conservatoires or universities of their first choice in the UK or overseas.
18. Following leaders' careful self-evaluation of curriculum and teaching, action is being taken currently to ensure that younger pupils' everyday school experience provides an optimum balance between music and academic learning. However, this is not yet fully embedded. In some lessons, pupils in the lower school did not have the level of focus or concentration on their academic work as seen during music tuition. Although there are appropriate procedures in place to track younger pupils' progress in academic subjects, these are not always completed as fully as they could be.
19. The curriculum for pupils of all ages is enriched by a wide range of educational visits, ensembles and clubs, including within boarding, which provide plenty of opportunities for extra-curricular and recreational activities. From Year 9 onwards, there is additionally a carousel of enrichment activities including study skills, drama, politics, art and careers.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

21. The friendly and caring school culture supports pupils to feel respected and pupils take this forward in their positive relationships with staff and their peers. Pupils maintain high standards of behaviour around school and in other settings such as the Cathedral. Pupils are courteous, kind and considerate, valuing and respecting each other's efforts and achievements, academically, musically and in other pursuits.
22. Pupils deepen their understanding of what it means to accept and respect others' personal or cultural differences and characteristics. Pupils understand the importance of appropriate relationships and explore these themes in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons and in the RSE curriculum. Pupils' attitudes to diversity are positive and they display sensitivity when discussing relationships.
23. Staff consistently emphasise the importance of pupils taking responsibility for their own behaviour, and help pupils to reflect on mistakes, encouraging them to move on positively. Pupils understand the sanctions and rewards systems in place, and the rationale for them. As a result of the clarity in expectations for behaviour and the effective guidance and support of day and boarding staff, pupils of all ages behave well.
24. Rare cases of bullying are dealt with effectively by leaders and in line with school policy. Pupils are able to access appropriate support should they experience unkindness or bullying. In addition to support from staff, older pupils help younger pupils with their studies or act as 'guardian angels', for example, accompanying them on walks to local amenities. Such activities are suitably risk assessed and older pupils are guided and supported regarding their responsibilities towards younger pupils.
25. Leaders ensure that the school's music specialism provides a rich context for developing pupils' spiritual knowledge and understanding, and sense of community responsibility. Pupils perform musically with passion and personal engagement. Pupils who help others in the wider community, benefit from understanding the importance of sharing and managing their use of their time and skills purposefully. When performing musically for audiences beyond the school, pupils gain insight in to how their commitment to music can lead on to future opportunities for employment and leisure.
26. Pupils' health and safety is prioritised and pupils have access to suitable first aid and medical care, including nursing, physiotherapy, counselling and hearing specialists. Health and safety checks, fire safety procedures, including fire drills for boarders, and site maintenance are all duly carried out. Supervision of pupils is effective in day and boarding settings. Leaders pay due attention to registering and monitoring pupil attendance. Admission registers are well maintained. The school reports appropriately to the local authority when pupils join or leave at non-standard transition times. Boarding staff and tutors play an effective role in closely caring for pupils' wellbeing and mental health in liaison with the broader pastoral team.
27. Pupils have suitable access to physical education, a gym, a specific programme supporting fitness to perform music and a healthy food menu. As a result, pupils are able to adopt a healthy lifestyle and cope well with their busy school life.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. Leaders actively promote British values. Assemblies, tutorials, effective notice board displays and the appropriate PSHE curriculum programme all contribute to pupils' acquisition of these values. The school's curriculum also ensures that pupils gain knowledge of and respect for public services in England. Due care is taken to avoid any political bias in discussions or presentations given. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern British society.
30. Pupils actively engage in the democratic process when electing members to the pupil forum and experience the principles of democracy in action when influencing aspects of school life in formalised gatherings. For example, boarders have elected to create, and have put in place, new clubs to extend the school's extra-curricular provision. Pupils understand what is and what is not acceptable behaviour in school. They go on to successfully apply this understanding when learning about the principle of the rule of law in society. The school's decision to approve an informal pupil dress code allows comfort when playing instruments but also permits self-expression and supports pupils' sense of individual liberty. Leaders and staff ensure that this regard for individual liberty is balanced with learning about mutual respect for others' differences, including through the PSHE programme and assembly topics. As a result, pupils have appropriate respect and regard for others' personal characteristics across all groups of people.
31. Leaders encourage pupils to develop an appreciation of different cultures through the taught curriculum. Pupils from the wide range of nationalities represented in the school live and work alongside each other cooperatively. Pupils' orchestras and ensembles involve them learning about the musical heritage of different cultures and countries and promotes collaboration between pupils. Guest musicians from across the world further extend pupils' insights and understanding.
32. The curriculum and timetable, for both academic and music lessons, places responsibility on pupils of all ages to organise themselves in order to be punctual to lessons with the correct personal learning resources and instruments. Staff track pupil movement effectively through the use of a digital timetable and support pupils with organisation when needed. This emphasis on pupils' self-reliance and independence results in pupils who are well prepared for the next stage in their education and future careers.
33. Boarding provision is effective in further supporting pupils' personal development. Pupils are confident and readily take initiative. For example, pupils start new clubs and activities of interest for their peers. Leaders and staff provide several opportunities for pupils to appreciate the value of service to others. For example, pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, perform concerts for members of the wider community, and work alongside the team of professionals in Manchester Cathedral.
34. The PSHE programme places an emphasis on economic education, in particular focusing on the importance of financial consideration when planning further musical, artistic or other educational placements and future careers. Pupils learn about and apply their understanding of financial matters when organising concerts and considering costs and income.

35. Leaders ensure that pupils receive a wealth of information, guidance and support regarding their application to conservatoires, universities and other placements. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in life.

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

36. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

37. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of day pupils and boarders are effective. Leaders tailor the school's safeguarding and related policies to the school's day and boarding provision and city-centre location, and identify, assess and address any associated risks.
38. Staff understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern. They are alert to the need to monitor pupils' attendance and whereabouts on the campus or in the school's locality. They ensure that pupils acquire appropriate road safety and personal safety knowledge when in the community beyond the school. Leaders ensure that pupils are kept separate from those areas of the school premises used for events such as concerts when members of the public have access to these facilities. Security staff are vigilant and effective in overseeing the safety of pupils on site.
39. Leaders ensure that staff are knowledgeable in child protection procedures, including those for online safety and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Staff understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern. They maintain professional boundaries with pupils, including during individual or small group music tuition. They understand the whistleblowing procedure and the need to self-refer to safeguarding leaders if they have any concern about the manner in which their own interactions with pupils might be perceived as inappropriate. Leaders provide regular safeguarding and child protection training and assess staff understanding of safeguarding requirements to ensure effective practice.
40. Leaders work effectively with external agencies when concerns arise. Any referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police are made promptly and incidents are managed well. Low-level concerns about adults working in the school and allegations against staff are managed appropriately. Filtering and monitoring systems support pupils to have safe access to technology and all pupils receive suitable education in online safety.
41. Leaders ensure that the choristers attending the nearby cathedral are supervised suitably and that the safeguarding arrangements in that setting are appropriate. Appropriate guardianship arrangements are in place for boarders from overseas. An independent listener attends the school weekly and pupils are confident to share concerns if necessary.
42. Safer recruitment checks are completed appropriately and an accurate record of checks is kept. The school's safeguarding commission maintains a robust, independent and suitably challenging oversight of leaders' safeguarding practice. Leaders review the implementation of the safeguarding policy in a thorough manner and continually strengthen safeguarding practice in light of any lessons learned.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Chetham's School of Music
Department for Education number	352/6021
Registered charity number	526702
Address	Chetham's School of Music Long Millgate Manchester M3 1SB
Phone number	0161 838 7201
Email address	lesleyhaslam@chethams.com
Website	www.chethams.com
Proprietor	Governing Body of Chetham's
Chair	Mr Malcolm Edge
Joint Principals	Ms Nicola Smith and Mr Tom Redmond
Age range	8 to 18
Number of pupils	334
Number of boarding pupils	213
Date of previous inspection	14 January 2020

Information about the school

44. Chetham's School of Music is a specialist co-educational day and boarding school for musically gifted pupils aged between 8 and 18 years, situated in the centre of Manchester. It is part of the Foundation of Chetham's Hospital School and Library founded in 1653, which comprises three separate charities. Governance is provided by a governing body some of whose members are appointed by the Feoffees (trustees) of Chetham's Hospital, Manchester City Council and Manchester Cathedral. The joint principals were appointed in September 2020.
45. Boarders are accommodated in three houses: Victoria House for the younger pupils and a boys' house and girls' house for older pupils. Some younger day pupils are choristers at the adjacent Manchester Cathedral.
46. The school has identified 119 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
47. English is an additional language for 66 pupils.
48. The school states its aims are to educate and unlock the talent of musically gifted children whatever their background, to provide as broad an academic curriculum as is possible in a specialist school and to develop the whole person, furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of each pupil.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 to 25 April 2024

49. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

50. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the joint principals, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

51. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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