



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
THE PURCELL SCHOOL**

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The Purcell School

Full Name of School	The Purcell School		
DfE Number	919/6239		
Registered Charity Number	312855		
Address	The Purcell School Aldenham Road Bushey Hertfordshire WD23 2TS		
Telephone Number	01923 331100		
Fax Number	01923 331166		
Email Address	info@purcell-school.org		
Headmaster	Mr David Thomas		
Chair of Governors	Sir Roger Jackling		
Age Range	8 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	178		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (73 boys; 105 girls)		
Numbers by Age	5-11:	5	
	11-18:	173	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	38	
Number of Boarders	Total:	140	
	Full:	140	Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	11 Nov 2014 to 14 Nov 2014		

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 2008.

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, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website 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.

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.

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 chair of governors and other governors, attended concerts, recitals and 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

Mr Stephen Cole	Reporting Inspector
Mr Alexander Mitchell	Team Inspector (Head IAPS school)
Dr Angela Slater	Team Inspector (Head SOH school)
Mr Richard Gibbs	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Caroline Pellereau	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of lower school, GSA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Founded in 1962, as the Central Tutorial School for Young Musicians, and based in London, the school moved in 1997 to its present site in Bushey, Hertfordshire. The Purcell School is a co-educational independent boarding and day school. It is one of four specialist music schools in England that are supported by the government's music and dance scheme. The school aims to provide young musicians of exceptional promise and talent with the best possible teaching and environment in which to fulfil their potential, irrespective of their background. It focuses on preparing pupils for entry to music colleges in the United Kingdom and abroad, as well as pupils who wish to study at university.
- 1.2 The school is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. Members of the governing body are trustees of the charity and the directors of the company. They carry out their function through termly board meetings, supported by the finance and general purposes and the education committees, which meet termly. Since the previous inspection day pupils have been included in the boarding houses and the girls' boarding house and medical centre have been refurbished as part of a longer term plan to upgrade and extend the already excellent facilities.
- 1.3 There are 178 pupils aged 9 to 18 (73 boys and 105 girls) of whom 140 are full boarders. Seventy-nine are in the sixth form. The ability profile of the senior school is above the national average, and significantly above the national ability in music. Some cohorts display a wide range of ability, although most are of at least above average, with some being of well above average ability. Twelve pupils are from the EU and another 22 are from elsewhere overseas.
- 1.4 Twenty-one pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and three have a statement; 10 of these receive specialist support. Fifty-one have English as an additional language, of whom 19 receive specialist teaching."
- 1.5 All pupils receive between two and three hours each week of individual music tuition from specialist teachers and are assessed for entry to the school on musical ability and potential.
- 1.6 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 very successfully fulfils its aims of providing young musicians of exceptional promise and talent with the best possible teaching and environment in which to fulfil their potential. Pupil achievement is excellent. It is exceptional in music, and good in academic studies. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve and make academic progress at the same level and sometimes faster than those of similar age and ability. The quality of teaching is good and in many aspects excellent. It shows a detailed awareness of the individual needs of pupils whose academic aspiration is usually second to their musical ambition, but does not always extend the more able. Pupils work co-operatively and independently but show limited curiosity in academic studies. They speak with clarity of diction and write with fluency, and their creative skills in both music and art are excellent. They are exceptionally attentive and perceptive listeners. The reduced range of subjects in the curriculum unlocks practice and performance time that is the seed-bed of the pupils' excellent musical and good academic progress. Pupils enthusiastically take up the opportunities for competition and extra-curricular musical activity, but opportunities for physical exercise are limited.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. Their behaviour is impeccable and they show good moral awareness and a keen sense of right and wrong. They cloak their talent with genuine modesty. Pupils' awareness of the non-material and immeasurable aspects of life is evident in their own playing and their appreciation of others' performances. Pupils who responded to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school and a very large majority said that teachers helped them to learn. A minority said that the school did not respond to their opinions, but this was traced to one issue in which the school had given priority to their welfare and safety. Pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care, although the impact of the tutor periods on their achievement or development is not clear. The quality of the boarding is good and the outcomes for boarders are excellent, but the leadership of boarding is not yet consistent across the houses. The arrangements for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are good but records of safeguarding training are inaccurate. Strong anti-bullying procedures are sensitively and effectively implemented.
- 2.3 The quality of governance and leadership and management is good. After a period of change the senior leadership team is responding to the recommendations outstanding from the previous inspection and provides a strong lead in identifying and implementing the objectives for the next few years. Procedures for the monitoring of teaching and use of assessment to improve attainment are not yet embedded, although firm arrangements have been agreed for appraisal and staff development. Governors commit considerable time and interest to the school and through meetings and visits have a strong understanding of the school's priorities. However the overview of safeguarding procedures by the governors has lacked sufficient detail.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

1. Ensure that governors and the senior leadership team monitor in more detail the safeguarding training of all staff.
2. Prioritise the introduction of effective performance review for all teaching and boarding staff.
3. Ensure teaching methods challenge the more able in academic lessons.
4. Ensure leadership and management of boarding achieve consistency of opportunities for all pupils.
5. Provide opportunities for pupils to engage in a greater range of extra-curricular activity and physical exercise.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 They are well educated in line with the school's aims, achieving exceptional levels of knowledge, skill and sophistication in musical performance. They display an unappeasable appetite to improve, committing between typically three to five hours of each day practising their first, second, and in many cases third study instrument, in addition to group rehearsals. GCSE and A level students show well developed and mature organisation in balancing their musical and academic commitments.
- 3.3 Pupils read well and possess advanced listening skills. They are co-operative in their learning as well as their playing. They are attentive, focused and learn rapidly. In a choral rehearsal they demonstrated extraordinary intonation, tone, clarity, and diction in performing a challenging a cappella piece. They have strong mathematical ability and display excellent physical control in their musical performances. They speak clearly and written work displays good vocabulary and fluency in both English and foreign languages. Pupils' creative maturity is apparent in the high standard of both 2D and 3D art that enhances the school environment, and in the superiority of their musical composition.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve outstandingly as individuals or as part of larger chamber groups or symphony orchestras. In 2014 Purcell pupils were finalists in the strings, keyboard, and woodwind and brass categories and provided the overall winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition. Two finalists in the BBC Jazz Award and two of the winners of the BBC Young composer competition were from the school. Individuals regularly win at festivals throughout the UK and Europe, and there is strong representation in all the National Youth and Children's Orchestras.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for 2011 to 2013, the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE are above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. IGCSE results have been altogether higher than worldwide norms. A-level results have been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. The levels of attainment at GCSE and standardised measures of data indicate that pupils make progress that is good in relation to pupils of similar abilities, and levels of attainment at A level show that they make progress in the sixth form that is appropriate in relation to pupils of similar abilities. Those pupils with SEND, or who have EAL, are given strong support and make progress that is at least in line with, and sometimes faster, than other pupils.
- 3.6 Pupils work co-operatively and independently but show limited curiosity in academic studies. Their questions are often to resolve confusion rather than because they are inquisitive to investigate a concept or issue in more depth.
- 3.7 Almost all pupils achieve their ambition of securing a place at a prestigious music college or university in the UK or abroad. In 2014, 22 of the 33 leavers went to conservatoires, 10 with scholarships, and 7 to university, and 4 took musical gap years. Although all pupils enter the school with considerable musical talent, the progress made in their understanding, knowledge and playing of music is remarkable.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.9 The school provides an effective curriculum which covers most of the subjects usually taught in English schools and enables the aims of the school to be met. The reduced number of subject choices recognises the particular aspirations of the pupils. Religious studies and geography are not offered but the pupils gain awareness of world culture through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and assemblies and an outreach programme. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not taught as a discrete subject but widely used in music and music technology.
- 3.10 The planning of the curriculum ensures effective coverage of the required areas of learning. In music lessons, pupils are encouraged to extend their learning well beyond the prescribed specifications and cross-curricular work in English enriches the pupils' experience. Support of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) ensures that they make appropriate progress, and tuition for those who have English as an additional language enables them to more easily access the curriculum. The emphasis on creative and expressive subjects is evident in the high quality of art, music and drama. The ICT centre and the library are well used. External trips and links with the wider community enhance the curriculum: a Year 12 visit to Virginia Woolf's London encouraged connectivity across subjects.
- 3.11 Pupils can choose from a variety of science options to fit with their busy musical schedules. Early entry for examination in IGCSE English and mathematics and GCSE music releases time in Year 11 or allows an early start to A level. French is taught from Year 7 and German is studied by all from Year 9.
- 3.12 The full extra-curricular programme is dominated by musical activity that allows pupils to further develop and broaden their experience. One pupil honed his conducting skills with a string orchestra that he had assembled. The plethora of opportunities to perform and listen accelerates the pupils' personal and musical development. The previous inspection recommended that the school introduced a balanced and co-ordinated activities programme, including opportunities for more physical exercise for younger pupils. In the parent questionnaires a small number of parents and pupils expressed the view that the school provides few opportunities for non-musical extra-curricular activities including physical exercise, whilst recognising the difficulties of this. Although older pupils may now attend a local gym and swimming pool, discussions with pupils support the inspectors' view that they do not have the opportunity to access more non-musical opportunities on the school site.
- 3.13 Relationships with the local and wider communities are many and varied. The outreach programme, *Impulse*, which was originally formed by pupils who wanted to take their compositions into local primary schools, is now a well-established programme involving many pupils in the senior year groups. Relationships with local, national and international concert venues are well developed and pupil-led projects have recently been taken to South Korea and Sri Lanka.
- 3.14 The school has facilitated access for pupils with limited mobility and has a clear plan to further improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.16 Much of the teaching is excellent, and none is unsatisfactory. It is effective in supporting the aims of the school. Much of the most effective teaching takes place in individual lessons and ensembles and results in exceptional levels of performance. Teaching is excellent in academic lessons where pupils are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the planned curriculum. In a chamber music lesson, the teacher's high expectations created an environment in which the pupils responded sensitively and enthusiastically, resulting in exceptional playing. In a drama lesson, skilful and enthusiastic teaching encouraged and enabled the pupils to develop first-rate individual and group performances.
- 3.17 Throughout the school, lessons are characterised by strong relationships that allow pupils without hesitation to ask for help and often enable teachers to predict difficulties. The style and approach encourages excellent behaviour and progress. Both teachers and pupils make good use of time. Teachers ensure that those pupils who arrive late because of musical commitments are integrated into the lesson quickly and smoothly. Classroom teachers are acutely aware of the pressures that are a consequence of the pupils' musical aspirations. This can result in approaches that are overly teacher-led and, although supportive, they can encourage passivity. The prevalence of closed questions provides little opportunity for debate or extension beyond the specification.
- 3.18 Almost all teaching demonstrates good subject knowledge and clear explanations, often reinforced by helpful worksheets or writing frames to prompt the construction of high quality answers. Lessons which encourage active participation from pupils capture pupils' interest, as in two well-planned history lessons on Martin Luther and on the Vietcong. A chemistry department website provides extension opportunities for pupils but few other departments use ICT to stimulate teaching and learning.
- 3.19 The school has gone some way to address the recommendation of the previous inspection that marking should be improved. In most, but not all, subjects marking is regular and thorough. There is no requirement to use a whole-school marking policy, and departments use their own marking systems. Teachers indicate how pupils can improve their work, either verbally or on paper and pupils confirm that they understand what they need to do to progress. In mathematics pupils' self-marking is corroborated by the teacher and leads to a strong pupil awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.
- 3.20 Subject teachers are aware of the pupils in their classes for whom English is an additional language or who have SEND. The EAL and SEND specialist teachers offer outstanding support to these pupils both in and out of class. Well-planned lessons that take account of their needs assist EAL and SEND pupils to make progress according to, and sometimes beyond, their abilities across the range of subjects studied. However their progress in some lessons is limited by the lack of specialist training in the teaching of EAL students.
- 3.21 Standardised test data is used for target setting in Year 10 and above. Teacher-generated assessment grades, given regularly to pupils and parents, are helpful in providing an increased focus on monitoring pupil progress.

- 3.22 In most subjects, homework is set regularly but the quantity and emphasis on it is uneven across subjects, often because teachers understand that for many pupils its importance is secondary to the demands in music.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils have a strong radar for the spiritual dimension of their lives. The exceptional opportunities for pupils to engage in high-quality music-making, which transcends the mere technical, lead to individuals with a highly developed sense of self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose. They appreciate and respect the non-material aspects of life as well as the skills and extraordinary talents of those around them. They greet their success with modesty and cloak their talent in humility. A striking feature of all performances is the reverent respect shown by the pupils as audience members.
- 4.3 The assembly programme offers further opportunities for reflection through topics that include '*What is truth?*' '*Values of stillness*' and '*Bartok's liberal values*'. Specifically religious topics are not generally addressed in assemblies. Boarders who wish to take part in organized worship can arrange to do so out of school.
- 4.4 The pupils have a keen moral awareness. They behave impeccably, respecting each other and forming firm friendships. They demonstrate excellent conduct including their ability to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law. Issues arising in school, for example relationships, friendships or bullying, are taken up as topics for whole-school as well as house assemblies. Their moral development is well established, as shown in a tutor group debate about the rights and wrongs associated with a rape case in the news. Pupils undertake a great deal of charitable work, much of it suggested by themselves. Cake sales, bungee jumping and musical performances feature amongst the many opportunities created by the pupils to support the various outreach projects and charities throughout the year.
- 4.5 The pupils' social skills are highly developed. Their music activities underpin the co-operation across the age groups. The very nature of shared music-making encourages collaboration and support for others. Younger pupils enjoy the support of their senior counterparts and this helps to develop a high degree of social awareness. They are warmly courteous, polite and well mannered. In the pupil questionnaire, almost all pupils reported that they love and appreciate their school and are very aware of its special nature.
- 4.6 Pupils understand their contribution to their school and wider communities, including a broad awareness and understanding of public institutions and services in England. The *Impulse* outreach programme has a positive impact on many senior pupils and encourages them to create opportunities to take composition and performance projects into local primary schools and further afield, including South Korea and Sri Lanka. Involvement in initiatives such as Hertfordshire's *Five Gold Rings* and the Arts Award Scheme enhance pupils' awareness and appreciation of the wider community.
- 4.7 Pupils are exceptionally cultured. Pupils embrace the international nature of the student body, respecting others' faiths and backgrounds, which creates a heightened sense of awareness around the school. The variety and extraordinary quality of their music-making exposes pupils to a wide range of opportunities which lead to a highly developed consciousness. The pupils' regular attendance at

performances in school, in London, and at other national and international venues, support their cultural development to an extremely high degree.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The pastoral care supports the school's aim to provide young musicians of exceptional promise and talent with the best possible environment in which to fulfil their potential. All staff actively support the pupils in managing their commitment to both the attainment of musical excellence and success in academic studies.
- 4.10 Relationships between pupils and staff and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent. Pupils feel safe and are well cared for. Sixth-form pupils spoke appreciatively about the support they are given with their further education applications and external careers advice. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a minority of pupils felt that the food was not good but their responses were more positive during the inspection visit. Healthy eating is encouraged by the range of nutritious food that is provided at meal times.
- 4.11 The school's ethos means incidents of poor behaviour are very rare. Policies are clearly set out: any potential bullying is quickly addressed and messages reaffirmed in PSHE sessions and assemblies. Clear records of the rare instances allow trends to be identified and suitable support put in place. In the pre-inspection pupil questionnaire a small minority of pupils commented that staff are not fair in the way they give sanctions and this was traced to a perceived unevenness in the quantity of set homework.
- 4.12 The EAL and overseas student co-ordinators provide good individual support for international students; but no guidance is given to staff to help them integrate new overseas pupils in the classroom.
- 4.13 Although a minority of pupils in the questionnaire said that the school does not listen to their views and respond to them, boarding houses collect and act on feedback in a number of different ways including surveys. The head boy and head girl chair meetings of the school council which have followed through on suggestions for entertainment.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.15 The safeguarding of pupils is given a high priority by the staff. There are comprehensive codes of conduct appropriate to the school, including extensive advice for one-to-one music teachers. All governors and staff, including visiting music teachers, have been trained to an appropriate level. Some are not aware of the implications of the latest statutory guidance document, however, and training has not always been accurately recorded. Safer recruitment procedures are methodically carried out. Although governors receive and fully discuss an annual safeguarding report they do not have a robust oversight of child protection or recruitment procedures.
- 4.16 All requisite actions are taken to reduce risk from fire and other dangers, including legionella. Fire risk assessments and training records are kept up-to-date have been standardised since the previous inspection. Fire drills are held regularly and

evacuation procedures are clear with exits well signed. Health and safety arrangements are meticulous and effective and include full records of electrical testing, safe storage of laboratory chemicals and risk assessments that encompass all areas of school life. Provision for sick pupils and for those with SEND is well made. There is a clear and practical crisis management plan. Access to the internet is filtered and all pupils receive guidance on e-safety. In the pre-inspection questionnaire all parents said that the school keeps their children safe.

- 4.17 Pupils state that they were well looked after if unwell or injured. The first aid policy is clear and staff in key areas are first-aid trained. Medicines are securely stored and monitored. Pupils with SEND are supported in and outside class. Admission and attendance registers are efficiently completed and archived.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.19 The school meets the general aims of the boarding houses. Boarding makes a significant contribution to the school, which meets all National Minimum Standards for boarding schools.
- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are excellent and a strong sense of community exists amongst the pupils. Boarders feel integrated into the school and, in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority stated that they enjoy boarding. Relationships across the community are constructive and pleasant and new boarders settle quickly and are made welcome. There is a range of appropriate adults to turn to over personal issues, including the school nurse and counsellor as well as house parents and tutors. There are opportunities for boarders to voice their views through a school council and through prefects, though, according to questionnaire responses and as confirmed in interviews, not all boarders believe that their views are taken into account. Prefects, who are confident in talking to adults as well as sympathetic in helping younger boarders, are keen to accept responsibility and develop a lead in organising social activities. Boarders are self-reliant, well-integrated and loyal to each other and to the school. Bullying is rare and is not tolerated by pupils.
- 4.21 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. New boarders are given induction materials that ease their integration and on arrival overseas boarders are assisted by a dedicated member of staff. The promotion of boarders' health is effective and arrangements for medical care have recently been restructured; most boarders state that they are well looked after if they feel unwell or are injured. Full boarders are registered with, and attend, appointments at a local GP practice. Pupils who need EAL tuition or who have SEND are cared for appropriately and a school counsellor and a physiotherapist visit the school every week. Although a minority of boarders suggested in the pre-inspection questionnaires that they are not happy with the food or the availability of snacks, in interview they reported that the quality of meals on offer is good. Snacks are provided in their common rooms at lunchtime and after prep and drinking water is available throughout the school. The catering department is sensitive to boarders' tastes, provides for special diets, and creates thoughtful and healthy menus despite the lower numbers of boarders at weekends. Sixth formers launder their own personal clothing but the housekeeping department oversees boarders' laundry and dedicated cleaners ensure the premises are kept to a high standard of hygiene. The investment in upgrading the boarding accommodation and the school medical centre has resulted in an excellent provision

with comfortable rooms for both boy and girl pupils who may be unwell. A very small minority of boarders commented in response to questionnaires that they do not think all their belongings are safe but boarders are able to lock their rooms and all have lockable safes for valuables. In discussion, groups of boarders did not agree that security of possessions was a problem. Information for parents is disseminated by email and newsletters and boarders report that contact with parents is quite easily made through telephones, electronic mail and online video communication. There is no school shop but older boarders are allowed off site and the younger ones are taken shopping, although they can also request items of stationery or toiletries from the matrons or house parents. There is a suitable complaints procedure and health and safety requirements are all met. A small minority of boarders stated in the questionnaire responses that they were not happy with the balance of free time and activities, but, as a specialist music school the daily routines are understandably demanding and opportunities for diverse recreational activities or for relaxation are limited. Older boarders may keep fit by attending a local gymnasium or swimming pool and evening fitness sessions are provided by staff on site. Full boarders who stay at weekends report that there are some activities on offer but these are affected by musical commitments. The overwhelming majority of parents and most boarders state that boarding at Purcell is enjoyable.

- 4.22 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are good, with procedures and practices ensuring that the safety of boarders is managed effectively by boarding staff. The school complies with all regulations and guidance in respect to safeguarding and recruitment checks. Evacuation drills are practised every term in boarding time. Effective anti-bullying and behavioural policies and procedures are in place and behaviour is very good. All boarding house staff and adults associated with boarding are up-to-date in safeguarding training. The whereabouts of boarders is regularly monitored and the missing person policy is known by all staff. Boarders are at all times under the responsibility of suitably trained members of staff and there is always an adult on call throughout each night in each house. Visitors are signed in to school and access to the boarders' rooms is restricted. The families of members of staff living on site have been through the required checks and have signed agreements with the school. Host families appointed before the recent change in policy on guardians are known to the school and have been appropriately vetted. In response to the questionnaire a large majority of boarders and all parents stated that they feel that boarders are safe.
- 4.23 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. A clear statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents and staff. Boarding houses are led by dedicated house staff who are well regarded by boarders. All boarding staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. There are weekly meetings of the house parents which are chaired by one of the deputy heads. Boarding documentation and policies have been progressively reviewed and all boarding staff are familiar with school policies and the NMS for boarding schools. The needs of individual boarders are recognised and records are well maintained. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Although some boarders perceive that there are inconsistencies between houses which they explained in interviews, the school is taking steps to ensure more evenness. While there is a clear commitment to continued improvement in boarding and some innovations which improve boarders' experience, regular performance reviews for staff are not formalised. The senior leadership team have a strong hold on the management of pastoral and academic issues although the role of the tutor is less clear.

- 4.24 Following the ISI Boarding Welfare Intermediate Inspection, October 2012, the lack of washbasins in Gardner House has been resolved. The recommendation to unify the guidance for boarding staff into a boarding staff handbook has been implemented. However action is still needed to ensure more consistency of practice between houses.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The individual professional expertise and background of the governors provides a strong platform to support the headmaster and senior team in achieving their shared vision of becoming an internationally first choice music school. They are highly committed and effectively discharge their responsibilities for financial planning, investment in staff, accommodation and learning resources. The governors have fully supported the school in its responses to the recommendations of the last inspection. Since then the governors have skilfully piloted the school through a period of considerable change in their own membership and senior staff. In the same period the girls' boarding house and medical centre have been refurbished as part of a longer term plan to upgrade and extend the already excellent facilities.
- 5.3 Governors have a good insight into the working of the school, and provide support, challenge and stimulus for improvement. Middle managers make departmental presentations which inform them first-hand about detailed aspects of school life: most recently the head of strings explained the challenges faced and pressures felt by highly talented string players. As well as attending specific musical events many spend a day in school informally talking to staff and pupils. The education committee closely analyses academic attainment, particularly in public examinations.
- 5.4 The governors receive informal induction training and have each received appropriate Level 1 safeguarding training but there is no appraisal of the efficacy of governance. The governors receive an annual safeguarding report from the designated senior lead. However, although the audit of safeguarding policies and procedures is detailed, it lacks robust challenge.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 The senior leadership team demonstrates a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, both in terms of the school site and the review or introduction of policies and practices to enable effective targeting and monitoring of the pupils' academic performance. The process of creating an educational development plan has engendered a shared sense of purpose.
- 5.7 The senior leadership team is successful in recruiting suitable staff, and in particular first-rate music teachers. Arrangements for safer recruitment and safeguarding induction are effective, although records of training are inaccurate. The senior team is supported by committed academic and pastoral middle managers. They informally monitor the performance of staff in some areas, and in particular boarding. However, with the exception of lesson observations of new teaching appointments by senior leadership, there are no consistent systems for improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning across academic departments or for setting development targets for individual members of staff. This is intended to be addressed by an imminent performance management scheme.

- 5.8 A new behaviour management strategy has met the recommendation of the previous report to review the sanctions and rewards policy. Pupils are closely supervised, including during their extensive practice sessions.
- 5.9 There are effective links with parents, carers and guardians. Concerns and complaints are dealt with quickly. School information and policies are on the school website and is easily accessible for present and prospective parents. In the parent pre-inspection questionnaire, a very small minority of parents said that they are not satisfied with the information they are given about their child's progress. The newly introduced parental portal provides parents with regular feedback on children's academic progress and records of absence and punctuality. Written reports are clear and informative and demonstrate an in-depth awareness of each pupil's individual strengths and development areas.
- 5.10 A small minority of parents said that the school does not encourage them to be involved in events and other aspects of its work. Inspection evidence shows that the school is committed to involving parents in the life of the school. The headmaster sends a weekly bulletin to parents highlighting the warmth of invitation to forthcoming school concerts and other events. An evening recital during inspection was very well supported. There are regular parents' evenings and the school arranges additional parent-teacher meetings upon request. A revived parents' association, formed in order to organise social events for parents and for fundraising, has recently enjoyed a quiz night and a coffee morning. It enjoys the full support of the senior leadership team but faces the challenge of a wide geographical spread of families.

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