



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**The Minster School**

**January 2020**



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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	The Minster School			
<b>DfE number</b>	816/6006			
<b>Address</b>	The Minster School Deangate York North Yorkshire YO1 7JA			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01904 557230			
<b>Email address</b>	school@yorkminster.org			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Angela Mitchell			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Frost			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	123			
	<b>EYFS</b>	24	<b>Juniors</b>	70
	<b>Seniors</b>	29		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28 to 30 January 2020			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 The Minster School is a day school for pupils aged between 3 and 13 years. Originally founded in 627 AD for the education of boy choristers, it became fully co-educational in 1987 and continues to educate choristers for the Minster. As a department of York Minster, the school is governed by the Chapter of York. The school is set in historic buildings on the south side of York Minster with the preparatory department occupying Old School, and the pre-preparatory and nursery in The Red House and The White House.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has redeveloped The White House to provide purpose-built nursery accommodation and expanded the outdoor learning facilities. A new head has been appointed with a revision of governance arrangements.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to create an environment where pupils develop into well-rounded individuals, both culturally and emotionally, and where each individual is able to contribute positively to their community.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 The pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, with a majority from white British families alongside a number from other ethnic groups. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils on entry is broadly in line with the national expectations. The school has identified 12 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, and 11 of these pupils receive specialist help. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for three pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified ten pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for a significant number of other pupils because of their special talents in music, sport, art, drama.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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 is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.5 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.6 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.7 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.8 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.10 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.11 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.13 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.14 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.15 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.16 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.17 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.18 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

**The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work.** It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.



## Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils of all ages demonstrate intellectual curiosity and a passionate desire to learn.
  - Pupils have exemplary attitudes to learning and work both independently and collaboratively with purpose and commitment.
  - Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills through both language and music.
  - Pupils achieve notable success in academic and creative subjects, particularly music, languages and art.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils display high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience.
  - Pupils' moral understanding is well developed: they understand how their decisions affect those around them and determine their own futures.
  - Pupils demonstrate appreciation and respect for one another: they are empathetic and caring.
  - Pupils display outstanding social skills, actively participating within the school and the wider community.

## Recommendations

- 3.3 In view of the excellent outcomes, the school may wish to consider:
- enabling pupils to extend their desire for knowledge across the curriculum by ensuring that all lessons provide sufficient pace and challenge
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to express their opinions and have an impact on school life, particularly through the regular input of the school council.

## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Throughout the school, pupils approach their learning with eagerness and intellectual curiosity. They work with commitment and focus, responding positively to the school's ethos of striving for excellence. Pupils make rapid progress in a classroom environment which encourages them to take intellectual risks and learn from their mistakes without fear of failure. Choristers perform with musical maturity and dignity, extending their ability to serve the Minster vocally, through expert musical direction. As independent learners, pupils extend their knowledge and skills, as demonstrated by older pupils imaginatively converting their texture etchings into pictures of their self-conscious, based on the work of Andre Breton. Younger pupils made distinctive waistcoats for aliens, carefully counting sticky stars to make each half match numerically. Pupils routinely support their contemporaries in collaborative tasks, encouraging each other as they measure challenging angles within mathematical shapes to solve problems together, or balance plastic bricks to make a house for the three little pigs. Pupils of all ages are ardent in their desire to achieve high standards. They understand the importance of taking responsibility for their learning and tackle challenges offered them with diligence. They apply themselves enthusiastically to their lessons and choral commitments, becoming adept learners and performers, extremely well supported by the strong oversight of senior leaders and the provision made by the Governing Board of the Chapter and members on the School Board.

- 3.6 Pupils have well-developed communication skills. They are articulate, fluent speakers, able to explain complex concepts with confidence. For example, older pupils debated the role of the small intestine using appropriate technical vocabulary while Nursery children talked happily about the parrot who helps them in learning English. Older pupils confidently absorb difficult vocabulary in French, for example, competently explaining the difference between the verbs 'savoir' and 'connaître'. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and are respectful of the opinions of their peers. Children in the EYFS gain competence in their motor skills, holding their pencils correctly and forming recognisable letters. Older pupils write fluently, for example, composing mature poetry in response to the work of famous artists. Pupils consistently use their evaluative skills to improve their own performance and encourage one another in their studies. Throughout the school, pupils are adept at communicating through their music making. Young pupils successfully manipulated dynamics to create a feeling of impending judgement when singing about the biblical fiery furnace of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The saxophone ensemble competently reproduced the upbeat appeal of jazz through their harmonies and complex rhythms. During Evensong in the Minster, the disciplined singing of the choristers engendered an atmosphere of praise and worship.
- 3.7 Pupils confidently apply their strong mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum and are able to use their numerical skills in a wide range of contexts. Pupils in Year 2 competently applied their understanding of simple fractions to work out how many pennies they would have if they spent a quarter of their money. Y1 pupils were able to identify mathematical shapes such as spheres, pyramids, cuboids and cylinders with precision. In the prep school, pupils are confident in their knowledge of the times tables, fluently explaining complex number patterns. Others described the life story of the number 36 referencing fractions, multiplication, division, place value, square numbers and partition. In Year 5, pupils deciphered information from a weather graph to explain the differences between rainfall in Bradford and Bombay, and the consequences to the standard of living in Bombay with such a sustained period of rainfall. Pupils of all ages are highly effective at numerical calculation, consistently and successfully applying their mathematical knowledge across the curriculum.
- 3.8 Pupils competently employ their ICT (information and communication technology) skills to support and further their learning. In Reception, children understand the need to hold their devices with two hands in order to take focused photographs of their work. Pupils in Year 1 successfully played a computer-generated game where they had to input the next shape in a sequencing series. Year 2 pupils confidently used a range of ICT skills to develop simple algorithms to compute a race between a pig, dog and rabbit, while older pupils utilised a range of techniques to create characters for a game. Year 8 pupils effectively applied their technical skills to research scholarship examination questions, resulting in an interesting, informative class debate. Pupils enjoy using their skills to research and present material to their contemporaries, and are highly competent in word processing. Pupils understand the need to evaluate information available on the internet, aware that sites can be misleading. Across the school, pupils effectively use ICT in a variety of ways in order to extend their technical skills and promote their learning in all subjects.
- 3.9 Pupils of all abilities achieve highly across a range of subjects. Pupils make excellent progress as they transition through the school, with almost half of the final year group consistently gaining music, sport and all-rounder scholarships to their senior schools. Pupils with SEND achieve in line with their contemporaries, many exceeding individual targets, due to the effective strategies implemented by their teachers. Pupils recognised as more able in the school's population make excellent progress, encouraged by a wide variety of challenging tasks designed to expand their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils learn quickly because of the excellent teaching they receive, although occasionally their progress is less rapid due to a lack of challenge and pace.

- 3.10 Pupils achieve particularly highly in music, art and French. In recent external music examinations, all the candidates were successful, with 82% of entrants gaining merit or distinction, some at high grades for their age. Pupils' artistic attainment is of a very high standard, with their artwork depicting the Stations of the Cross on public display during Holy Week and used as part of the Good Friday acts of worship in the Minster. Pupils are highly able linguists, notably in French, as a result of excellent specialist teaching from Nursery upwards. From Year 6, pupils successfully extend their language capability through the addition to the timetable of Spanish, Mandarin Chinese and Latin. Almost all pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and most parents, indicated their satisfaction with the quality of teaching in the school.
- 3.11 Throughout the school, pupils display excellent attitudes towards their learning. As a result of the broad, challenging curriculum, pupils confidently use higher-order thinking skills, analysing and evaluating arguments to support their understanding. This was seen in a Year 6 Latin lesson, when pupils were able to define and identify nominative, dative, genitive, accusative and ablative endings with ease. Pupils of all ages are extremely well read and enjoy writing their reflections on the books and stories they have read in carefully presented journals. Choristers demonstrate outstanding self-discipline in their dedication to their music. They are immensely proud of the service they provide to the Minster, constantly striving for perfection under the guidance of their choir master.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.13 Pupils display strong personal development, nurtured by a community which values personal fulfilment, well-being and happiness, and seeks to promote these outcomes throughout the school. The atmosphere within the school is welcoming and calm, with pupils actively supporting and being kind towards each other. Year 8 buddies mentor younger pupils, acting as big brothers and sisters and easing their transition into the prep school. In the pre-prep, pupils demonstrate well-developed social skills, for example, sharing modelling dough, encouraging one another in their activities and handing out books for their teachers. From an early age, pupils begin to appreciate the positive benefits such as finding pleasure and fulfilment in working and playing. More senior pupils take pride in their positive work ethic, effectively prioritising their commitments and organising their work books with care. Pupils develop these qualities as a result of strong leadership which has successfully overseen the introduction of a 'spread the happiness' campaign throughout the school. Pupils are enthusiastic in their support of their community. They engage freely in discussions with their tutors and teachers, eager to shape their educational experience. Elected form representatives bring the views of their peers to the school council, however the council has met once this year and pupils would welcome the opportunity to reinvigorate this forum.
- 3.14 Extending beyond their own community, pupils are sensitive to the needs of others. They are highly active in their support for a wide range of charities, raising money for the homeless of York and holding cake sales for local charities. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in the Archbishop of York's Young Leader Award, identifying actions to help others. The senior choir regularly sings for residents in a local care home and the choristers participate willingly in the many public services held in the Minster. Through well-established links with schools in France and the Caribbean, pupils contribute to the lives of other children by fund-raising and establishing strong lines of communication with their peers abroad. Pupils demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence, expressing feelings of empathy towards those who are not as fortunate as themselves, and are desirous to make the world a better place for everyone.

- 3.15 Pupils are self-aware and confident. They develop a reflective approach towards their lives in school through consistent opportunities given for self-reflection. For example, choristers are asked to evaluate aspects of their own performance and that of their peers, and as a result, sing with confidence and professionalism. Pupils are well organised and successfully manage their commitments, displaying determination to succeed in their endeavours. They know how to improve their academic achievement, supported by group work where they explore what it means to be independent and proactive in improving their own performance. Within the classroom, pupils approach challenging work with zest and vigour, encouraged by the prevailing 'can do' ethos. Younger pupils, for example, begin their class singing lessons with an enthusiastic physical and vocal warm-up, everyone doing their best to loosen their muscles and then vigorously attempt their arpeggios. In the prep school, pupils were seen confidently tackling the problems associated with digestion, a lack of vitamin D and seasonal adjustment disorder. In Year 3, pupils were able to articulate the emotional feelings of Rhodpis, the Egyptian princess, at the end of her story, and then present their own fictional endings. The overwhelming majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire stated that their teachers encourage them to think and learn for themselves.
- 3.16 Pupils of all ages demonstrate a clear understanding of the behaviour expected of them, taking ownership for the class rules they formulate themselves. Younger children respond well to 'golden time', looking to their teachers to guide their behaviour and help them get it right. Pupils are confident in their understanding of the need to take responsibility for their own actions and are aware of the consequences of the choices they make. This was seen when Year 3 pupils undertook a piece of work based on decision making, showing a mature awareness of the consequences of wrong or negative actions and how to avoid this by making better decisions. Pupils speak sensibly of how their behaviour can affect those around them. They willingly take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour, demonstrating good manners and a consciousness of how to behave around one another and visitors. A very large majority of parents indicated in their questionnaire responses that the school expects their children to behave well and that they are highly satisfied that the school effectively promotes fundamental British values of tolerance and fairness. Pupils show respect for one another and for those who teach them, working together with a shared sense of purpose. As a result, individuals from all backgrounds feel valued and able to share their personal traditions and beliefs in a celebratory spirit. Pupils gain a further understanding of the faiths of the world through their religious education lessons and learn to appreciate cultural differences through their studies in languages, humanities, art and music.
- 3.17 Pupils have a well-developed sense of spiritual awareness. They display maturity in their response to the beauty of their surroundings and the proximity of the Minster, demonstrating pride in the ancient architecture as they move between school and the cathedral. They approach artefacts with respect for their historical value, as was seen during an assembly when King Charles I's Bible and prayer book were brought for the pupils to see. At first thinking only of the possible monetary value of these books, pupils quickly demonstrated a mature insight by deciding that, for many, the real worth would lie in what was written inside. Pupils find inspiration through their music. Year 4 pupils spoke about the way a new song changed their feelings, explaining that the melody made them feel dreamy and happy and wanting to sing it over and over again. Others described how a medley created feelings of both happiness and sadness as the melodies changed. Choristers approach their music with diligence, aware of the need to show respect for the spiritual nature of their singing and the effect this has on listeners. Pupils debate emotive and moral topics with sensitivity conscious of philosophical implications, whether they are presenting the case for or against capital punishment, or debating whether fox hunting should be banned.

3.18 Pupils develop a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, supported by assemblies, tutor and house talks, and a strong physical, social, health and education programme. Across the school, pupils know how to take any concerns to their teachers and are confident of receiving help and support. They are able to describe the need to protect themselves online and understand the value of mental well-being and safeguarding. Pupils know the benefits of good nutrition and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of healthy choices available to them in the dining room. They are physically active and lively, appreciating the range of sporting opportunities offered by the school. They know the importance of eating healthily and keeping fit, learning about this in their lessons and through assemblies, and are appreciative of the provision of first aid and counselling should these be required. Throughout the school, pupils feel valued and well-supported by those who look after them.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with School Board members, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Pamela Leech	Reporting inspector
Mr Malcolm Carling	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, IAPs school)
Mr Paul Barlow	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPs school)