

# Best practice

The Cathedral School, Llandaff, Cardiff

Number of pupils: **650**

Age range: **3-16 years**

Date of Estyn inspection: **February 2012**



**Area of sector-leading practice which has been identified during inspection and relates to a particular quality indicator:**

**Key Question:** 1

**Quality indicator:** Standards

**Aspect:** Pupil motivation, standards and wellbeing

**Context and background to sector-leading practice:**

The Cathedral School is a co-educational independent day school in Cardiff for pupils aged 3-16.

In the secondary phase, two-thirds of pupils have come up through the school's primary phase and a third have joined at 11+ from other local schools. In view of a national tendency for key stage 3 to be a 'dip' phase when pupils can lose focus and coast, the school has provided an incentivisation programme for focus and achievement in key stage 3, which is largely pupil managed.

## Description of nature of strategy or activity:

The 'Headmaster's Award' programme begins at Year 7 at 'Bronze' standard. It continues in Year 8 at 'Silver' and is completed in Year 9 at 'Gold' standard. There are five sections that have to be completed for bronze, silver and gold, though at differentiated levels appropriate to the school structure and organisation. These sections are:

- Academic;
- Leadership;
- Physical;
- Development of skills; and
- Extension activities.

Each section has to be completed to a suitable standard with the pupil's completion validated in a record book by a responsible adult.

Examples of activities that can be undertaken to complete each section include:

Academic:

- Write an original and insightful review of a book, film or play
- Produce a wall display on a relevant area of study in any subject
- Give a presentation which shows original thought and research
- Regularly attend the school's extra-curricular lectures programme and produce a short report

Leadership:

- Conduct tours for visitors around the school, explaining its ethos and aims
- Help at a group/activity

*"The award has developed pupils' leadership qualities and particularly interpersonal skills"*

within school or act as a mentor to younger pupils

- Contribute to the community through a club, society, church or organisation
- Active involvement in charity awareness and fundraising

Physical:

- Represent house or school in sporting competition
- Engage in various Outward Bound activities organised by the school, family or scouts
- Regularly attend school sports or fitness sessions to improve personal health and fitness

Development of Skills:

- Commit time on a regular basis to a skills-based activity by taking up a new skills-based activity, or developing an existing interest in a new way or to a higher standard
- Performing publicly in one or more forms of expressive arts or participating in house activities within school.

Extension Activities can be undertaken in any area. In the academic area, for example pupils might undertake a research project and produce a report. As part of physical or skill development, pupils might contribute regularly at a high level to an organisation outside school.

Commendations can be achieved in each section, either by the exceptional standard to which the activity is completed or by the variety of activities undertaken. Achieving commendations allows the pupil to gain a Merit or Distinction, dependant upon the number of commendations achieved.

At the end of the academic year, parents are invited to a presentation evening at which the awards are presented to those who have achieved them and aspects of the work undertaken to gain the award are highlighted. The award is self-managed by pupils who use a record book produced by the school to track their own progress. Although the teacher in charge of the award oversees pupils' progress through the sections, the onus is on pupils to decide how and where to complete the award. In this way the award promotes independence

and self-motivation.

## **What impact has this work had on provision and learners' standards?**

The school has carried out surveys of pupils and parents, which have indicated that participation in the award has:

- helped pupils with their organisational and communication skills, particularly through the academic section;
- improved pupils' confidence and helped them to settle more easily into school, particularly the physical section in Year 7;
- developed pupils' leadership qualities and particularly inter-personal skills;
- improved pupils' attitudes towards areas of school life that they might not otherwise have engaged with;
- encouraged pupils to try new things and to take a few risks, particularly in outdoor pursuits for extension activities;
- increased pupils' participation in house events and competitions, particularly in areas such as music, drama and creative arts (including poetry, photography and portraits); and
- enhanced pupils' awareness of the local community, particularly through their involvement in charitable events.