

# Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report For Schools with Residential Provision

St George's School, Ascot

November 2022

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## **School's Details**

School	St George's Sch	nool, Ascot		
DfE number	868/6001			
Registered charity number	309088			
Address	St George's School			
	Wells Lane			
	Ascot			
	Berkshire			
	SL5 7DZ			
Telephone number	01344 629900			
Email address	office@stgeorges-ascot.co.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Liz Hewer			
Chair of governors	Mr Alistair Mackintosh			
Age range	11 to 19			
Number of pupils on roll	270			
	Day pupils	166	Boarders	104
	Seniors	197	Sixth Form	73
Inspection dates	8 to 11 November 2022			

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## 1. Background Information

#### About the school

1.1 St George's School is an independent day and boarding school. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils. The school started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a prep school for male pupils and became a school for female pupils in 1904. It is a registered charity overseen by a board of governors. There are three boarding houses, catering for different ages. A new bursar and a new chair of governors have been appointed since the previous inspection.

#### What the school seeks to do

1.2 The school aims to be a place where pupils flourish academically, creatively, physically and morally and where risks can be taken and challenges embraced. The school strives for the very best for its pupils so that they become happy, responsible, well-balanced and resilient individuals, ready for the outside world.

## About the pupils

1.3 Pupils come from a wide range of family backgrounds, including professional backgrounds. Approximately one-fifth of the school pupils are from international families, mostly based outside the UK from Africa, Europe and Asia. The ability profile of the school is above the national average for those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 71 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities of whom 31 receive additional support. The majority of SEND needs relate to specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. No pupil has an education, health and care plan. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is 43; of these, 35 receive additional support for their English.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

#### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management.

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 standards and requirements can be found here: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

## **Key findings**

2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards)
Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 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's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships and sex education, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

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

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Boarders are supported to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff which are based on mutual trust and respect. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 13, 17 and 21 are met.

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

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 3, 5–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met.

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 19 and 22 are met.

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

- 2.13 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 4, 7 and 23 are met.

#### PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.15 A range of information is 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.

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

- 2.17 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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 14 are met.

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

- 2.19 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 wellbeing of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 2 are 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.

The headline judgements apply 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 make excellent progress throughout the school, achieving results at GCSE and A level which are well above the national average.
  - Pupils achieve well across all areas of the curriculum and particularly in the creative subjects.
  - Pupils' communication skills are excellent; orally they are astute and confident, and their writing shows an excellent command of language.
  - Pupils' achievements in co-curricular activities are extensive.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
  - Pupils are highly confident, combining healthy self-knowledge, first-class social skills and an awareness of the world around them.
  - Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and the value of respect for others and relate this to their interpretation of present-day issues.
  - The pupils are excellent at working collaboratively and appreciate working alongside those who have different talents and skills.
  - The school is an inclusive community in which those from different backgrounds get on extremely well together.

#### Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
  - Improve pupils' progress even further by focusing less on examination technique and by providing opportunities for them to extend their learning beyond the syllabus and develop truly enquiring minds.

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

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 The high academic standards achieved represent successful fulfilment of the school's ambitious aims. Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school. In the years 2019 to 2022, the school's GCSE results have been well above the national average, with between one-half and three-quarters of pupils achieving the highest grades. In 2022, out of those schools subscribing to a national database, the

- school was ranked seventh in terms of value-added for progress through the GCSE years. This excellent progress continues through the sixth form where, over the same period, results have also been well above the average for maintained schools. In 2022, three-quarters of passes were at the highest two grades, placing the school in the top five per cent for value-added progress at A level.
- 3.6 It is not just the academically capable whom the school enables to achieve. A group of pupils talked to inspectors about the profound impact the school has had on their achievement and personal development, almost all having arrived at the school with specific needs: slow processing, lack of confidence, undiscovered dyslexia amongst other needs. Each pupil explained how the school had helped them to achieve way more than they thought themselves capable of achieving. This did not always result in the highest grades or the most conventional A-level choices but enabled each pupil to succeed in something they were good at. In response to the parents' questionnaire, the vast majority said that the school meets their children's particular individual educational needs, a view confirmed by the inspection findings.
- 3.7 Pupils feel positive about their progress over time. They receive frequent feedback, both formally and informally, in all subjects and in all age groups. Pupils gain an objective awareness of their progress through regular class tests, instant feedback from work marked online, oral comments from teachers as well as formal gradings. They gain a sense of achievement from their own performance in class, and benefit from a culture of positive reinforcement. Work is set at different levels which ensures good progress for those with SEND as well as the most able pupils. In response to the parents' questionnaire, the vast majority said that the boarding experience has helped their children's progress, a view with which inspection findings concur.
- 3.8 Pupils achieve well across all areas of the curriculum, and particularly in the creative subjects. In a sixth-form photography lesson, for example, pupils produced photography projects using a variety of additional media such as two-sided photographs set in resin blocks and colour portrait photographs embellished with embroidery. Throughout the school, there are vibrant displays of imaginative artwork. In a sixth-form biology lesson, pupils demonstrated excellent scientific knowledge as they worked in pairs to identify different proteins. Occasionally, however, teachers focus too much on examination technique and the quest for extra marks, rather than extending pupils' learning beyond the syllabus and developing truly enquiring minds. This may well account for the views of a small minority of pupils who, in response to the questionnaire, said that their skills and knowledge do not improve in most lessons and that most lessons are not particularly interesting.
- 3.9 Pupils' communication skills are excellent. Orally, pupils are astute and confident. On a tour of the school, sixth-form pupils talked with confidence, interest and clarity on a variety of topics related to their experience of school and their plans for the future, showing insight and maturity. Their writing demonstrates excellent command of the language. In English, pupils in Year 8 were required to write a continuation chapter of the text which demonstrated accuracy, first-class subject knowledge and excellent use of appropriate literary devices so that it was consistent with what had gone before in tone and pitch. Pupils demonstrate skills of distillation and non-verbal communication. In a politics lesson, pupils expertly summarised how to increase or decrease prime ministerial power in the form of a tweet whilst, in a drama lesson in Year 7, pupils successfully conveyed language to describe a gulp, a squint, a heave and a wretch through mime to the rest of the class. Classroom teachers encourage plenty of oral work in lessons, either as individuals or in pairs or small groups. Other factors outside classroom teaching also contribute to the effective development of communication skills, such as examinations for The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), public speaking lessons, tutor group assemblies, house debating competitions, Model United Nations and Young Enterprise. An interesting initiative is the 'diversity walk' where sixth-form pupils have to talk to pupils they do not know. Pupils with SEND use assisted technology widely, such as text-to-speech and dictation tools, and presented an assembly on neurodiversity capturing the attention of all.
- 3.10 Pupils' achievements outside the formal curriculum are extensive. Pupils have represented the school at county level and regionally in swimming, athletics, netball and lacrosse amongst other sports.

Achievements in music, dancing, debating, drama and cookery are considerable. Almost all of Year 10 and a large proportion of Year 11 take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme at bronze and silver levels, and a small minority go on to achieve their gold level award. The school has four Young Enterprise groups in Year 12. These additional achievements are part of the school leaders' deliberate policy for every girl to be involved in some extra-curricular activity every day and leads to fulfilment of the school's aim to produce happy and well-balanced pupils.

- 3.11 Pupils' mathematical skills develop well, and they apply these extensively in other subjects. Analysing graphs, measuring distances and time, tallying, critical path analysis, correlation, percentages, share prices, inflation, depreciation, map scales are used effectively in subjects such as physical education (PE), religious studies, economics, psychology, geography, science and music. For example, in A-level business studies, pupils worked carefully on supply-and-demand graphs. In A-level psychology, pupils validated the significance of their findings and results and, in GCSE PE, pupils carried out fitness test calculations accurately, such as breathing and heart rates.
- 3.12 Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are excellent thanks to a leadership decision to supply every pupil with a laptop device. The use of ICT is second nature to almost all pupils and, where a pupil is unsure of how to achieve a desired effect, a quick supporting hand from another pupil solves the problem. Pupils feel that they are highly effective users of ICT. Some sixth-form pupils complete all of their work online as they can see that working in this way allows them to work anywhere with ease. Pupils and teachers alike appreciate the swift marking and returning of work and opportunities for real-time correction facilitated by this way of working in and outside the classroom. Pupils' ICT skills are utilised well in their artwork, and their engagement with musical notation software is used effectively in music. Teachers know that all pupils are competent and so can design lessons around that. Staff can monitor in class what pupils are doing and message them independently.
- 3.13 Pupils' study skills develop extremely well, from fortnightly sessions for pupils in Year 7 where they are taught different study skills through to the participation of all sixth-form pupils in the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Pupils spontaneously ask higher-order questions, are quick to recall relevant information and make perceptive links with other areas of study. They argue and reason logically. In an assembly introducing school leaders' plans to extend the EPQ, pupils in Year 11 talked knowledgeably to those in Year 10 about the benefits of participation in the Independent Research Project. Pupils develop the ability to hypothesise and apply their understanding to a real-life situation. For example, in an English lesson in Year 9 and looking at the plot of *Animal Farm* studied thus far, pupils conjectured on why the characters behaved as they did and hypothesised about what might happen next. In a physics lesson in Year 9, a pupil related the discussion of spring constant to the elasticity of her hair grip, explaining how the value of the spring rate would decrease as it lost its property.
- 3.14 Pupils' positive attitudes towards learning are a striking feature of the school. Although, in response to the pupils' questionnaire, a small minority said they do not find lessons interesting, this was not borne out in observations made during the inspection. Throughout the school, the pupils were fully engaged and interested in their lessons. They work with enthusiasm individually, preparing well for lessons, settling rapidly down to work and contributing willingly in class. They are also highly effective in paired and group work, being responsive listeners, supportive and respectful of their peers, knowing how to collaborate and often willing to lead on a task.

## The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.16 Pupils show excellent levels of self-understanding in how to improve their learning and performance. Pupils in Year 7, for example, were required to set three goals, academic, co-curricular and personal and say what they would do to achieve them. Pupils told inspectors that their time management and

self-motivation improve as they progress through many opportunities to develop all-round as a person within the co-curricular programme. As a result, they demonstrate healthy self-knowledge, well-developed study skills, first-class social skills and an awareness of the world around them. This combination of personal attributes ensures they get the most out of their schooling and are active contributors to their community. Pupils are disciplined in class and not afraid to seek help or take risks. The well-balanced school day, the size of the school and the impact of boarding contribute to pupils' developing confidence. Many of the co-curricular activities run across year groups which helps the younger pupils to develop confidence. Activities such as the DofE scheme and Young Enterprise help pupils to develop resilience.

- From their behaviour, their attitude towards one another and their participation in lessons, it is clear that the pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They understand the value of respect and that each person is accountable for their own behaviour. Almost every pupil, in response to the questionnaire, acknowledged that the school expects them to behave well. A small minority said that pupils are not always kind to each other, the school does not teach them how to form positive relationships and does not sort out poor behaviour. This was not the experience of the inspection team which found, in every lesson, pupils who clearly enjoyed being together and showed great respect for their teachers and for each other. Pupils demonstrate an acute awareness of how unfairness manifests itself in the real world and of the moral courage to face persecution for one's beliefs. In an English lesson in Year 12, for example, pupils related the issues raised by The Handmaid's Tale, such as the suppression of women and religious persecution, to present-day concerns of people smuggling and news stories about headscarves in Iran. Lower down the school in Year 9, when discussing the behaviour of the animals in Animal Farm, pupils showed insight into how and why the animals behaved in uncharacteristic, unkind, immoral ways, and considered how humans might act in similar circumstances. Pupils drew attention to the debates they have in biology on matters such as abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty and in physics as they consider different energy sources and our carbon footprint, showing a lively awareness of current issues.
- 3.18 The pupils are excellent at working collaboratively and appreciate the need to listen to each other's opinions. This is encouraged by the teachers but also manifests itself naturally in many different ways. In many lessons, pupils were seen helping each other, preparing work together or discussing issues before presenting their findings to the class. In a Latin lesson in Year 8, pupils worked highly effectively in groups on a carousel activity to gather facts about the ancient games, assisting each other, suggesting solutions and encouraging one another. They appreciate the advantages of working alongside people with different talents and characteristics in pursuit of a common goal. Pupils explained to inspectors how they use this to their advantage in activities such as house drama or house music competitions.
- 3.19 There is compelling evidence that pupils are inclusive of those from different backgrounds. Pupils are proud of their relationships with one another, and this extends beyond the school to their eagerness to understand the cultures and plights of others around the world. Pupils are tolerant and sensitive to the needs of others and empathise with those in varied scenarios. In a French lesson in Year 13, for example, pupils showed concern at how different religions and races are treated in the Parisian suburbs by the police and white middle class as depicted in *La Haine* by Karine Harrington. In boarding houses, pupils value opportunities to share their different cultures through food nights. Pupils show videos of their cultures in tutorials and assemblies, which are followed by questions, generating healthy discussion and a willingness to learn about others. At the start of the year, teaching staff generate a seating plan to mix pupils from different backgrounds so that they can get to know each other, and boarding dorm plans encourage inclusion by mixing pupils from different nationalities. In chapel, pupils have responded thoughtfully to talks delivered by pupils on neurodiversity or outside speakers from different religions. Pupils in Year 10 focus on kindness to all and being encouraged to do a daily, random act of kindness.

- 3.20 The pupils have a good understanding of how the decisions they make are important determinants of their own success academically and in terms of their relationships and wellbeing. Pupils are given guidance and advice on making decisions but understand that the choices they make will have consequences, such as with subject choices for future career pathways. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school shows their ability to make sound decisions throughout the day. In many lessons, pupils choose between levels of difficulty. In a Year 7 computer science lesson, for example, pupils were given a choice as to whether or not they should attend a master class explaining how to use more advanced techniques. Half the class chose to attend, the rest had the confidence to say that they were not yet at that level.
- 3.21 Pupils have a profound awareness of the non-material aspects of life which is often evident in their kindness to others, their mutual respect, their conversations and their enjoyment of all the possibilities that school brings. The best expression of pupils' spiritual understanding is shown through highly reflective artwork on display around the school. Pupils' engagement in chapel and, in particular, the chapel choir, provides a root from which their strong spiritual awareness grows. Pupils' projects in Year 7 entitled 'What makes me?' show awareness of different non-material aspects through their consideration of the facets that make up a human being. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the concept of people trying to get closer to God or growing in faith.
- 3.22 Pupils like to take on responsibilities, and to help others. Older pupils act as strong role models to juniors, and all pupils look for ways to make contributions to their own school and wider society. This is demonstrated by pupils' engagement in running and contributing to charity work for both the local community and for the needs worldwide. Those engaged in the DofE all contribute in some way through their volunteering work to the local community. For example, pupils visit local primary schools to read with younger children, provide company for the elderly in care homes or contribute to a local foodbank. Prefects play a significant role in the life of school such as open mornings, giving guided tours for visitors, and speaking at events. Pupils have many opportunities to engage in a range of different councils such as the school council, the environment council, diversity and inclusion group or the food committee and fulfil these roles well.
- 3.23 Staying safe and healthy is an inherent part of school life. Pupils are well aware of the need to look after themselves and their peers. They have a good understanding of specific, age-appropriate strategies such as online safety, safety measures in laboratories and elements of safeguarding. In their response to the questionnaire, a very small minority of pupils said that the school does not encourage them to be healthy. However, the findings of the inspection are that the well-balanced school day provides ample opportunities to enjoy a healthy lifestyle in terms of nutrition, physical exercise, recreation and nature. Pupils keep physically fit through sport. There is plenty of choice of food at lunchtimes which were almost universally praised by pupils for their quality, quantity and variety. In their personal, social and health (PSHE) lessons, pupils gain a good understanding of physical safety, online safety and first aid. They acquire a good understanding of consent in the RSE component of their PSHE lessons. Sixth formers, who had chosen to do an extra-curricular cookery course, demonstrated a first-class awareness of the benefits of eating together, the need for a healthy diet, the ability to budget for food, how to prepare meals and the joy of sharing meals.

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## 4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended tutor group meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

#### **Inspectors**

Mr Graham Sims Reporting inspector

Mrs Diane Durrant Compliance team inspector (Former deputy head, SofH school)

Mrs Louise Belrhiti Team inspector (Former assistant head, HMC school)

Mr Richard Feldman Team inspector for boarding (Member of senior management team, HMC school)