

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Griffin House Preparatory School

February 2020



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DfE number	825/6023
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Headmaster	Mr Tim Walford
Proprietor	Chatsworth Schools
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils on roll	154
	EYFS 35 Prep 119
Inspection dates	25 to 27 February 2020

School's Details

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Griffin House Preparatory School is an independent co-educational one-form entry day school for pupils aged between 3 and 11. In January 2019, it was acquired by a new proprietor, a company that now provides the school governing body of four members.
- 1.2 Since 1939, the school has occupied a large Victorian property set in five acres of grounds in the village of Little Kimble, between High Wycombe and Aylesbury. It has two main sections: Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the Prep School for Years 1-6. Pupils are admitted without academic selection and the school is non-denominational.

What the school seeks to do

1.3 Griffin House School aims to provide a vibrant, broad and balanced experience and curriculum, with individualised learning to enable all children to reach their academic potential. The objective is for children to feel secure and valued in a happy, safe and nurturing environment, ensuring that they become confident, inquisitive, responsible, kind and independent learners.

About the pupils

1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and business families, mostly living within a fifteen-mile radius of the school, who reflect the ethnic background of the local area. The range of pupils' ability is judged from inspection evidence to be above average. Two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan funded by the local authority. The school has identified seven pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including diabetes, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other processing and language difficulties, who all receive support. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. Data used by the school have identified 13 pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them through extension opportunities within the classroom and intervention sessions.

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, 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 provisions is considered. 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 <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 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: <u>The Education (Independent School</u> <u>Standards) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework</u>.

Key findings

2.1 The school does not meet all of the required 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 should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school measures attainment using National Curriculum tests. In the years 2017 to 2019, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and mathematics was above the proportion attaining that standard in maintained schools.
- 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 pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained as required, and a disability access plan is in place.
- 2.8 The school does not pay consistent regard to current requirements in relation to health and safety and the implementation of the risk assessment policy, since it has not routinely identified and mitigated all the relevant hazards.
- 2.9 The school has an appropriate fire safety policy, but this is not implemented consistently. Actions required by a recent fire risk assessment had not been addressed in a timely manner. Fire wardens have received appropriate training and regular fire drills are carried out and recorded. Fire equipment is checked at appropriate intervals.
- 2.10 An effective strategic approach to risk assessment was not in place, with inadequate risk assessment of the grounds permitting access to the stream and unsecured flammable, corrosive and toxic chemicals, and an insufficient response by the school to the fire risk assessment.
- 2.11 Shortcomings identified by the inspectors were remedied during the course of the inspection. However, embedded secure practice was not able to be demonstrated.
- 2.12 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 7, 9, 10 and 13–15, 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, but those in paragraphs 11 [health and safety], 12 [fire safety] and 16 [risk assessment] are not met.

Action point 1

• the school must ensure that it pays consistent regard to health and safety requirements in order to create a safe environment for pupils [paragraph 11; EYFS 3.54]

Action point 2

• the school must ensure that in future prompt action is taken whenever potential fire hazards are identified [paragraph 12; EYFS 3.55]

Action point 3

• the school must ensure that risk assessments are always drawn up in accordance with the school's own risk assessment policy, that they identify areas of risk and that the risks identified are mitigated promptly and effectively [paragraph 16(a) and (b); EYFS 3.54 and 3.64]

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

- 2.13 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.14 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

- 2.15 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. Acoustics and lighting are appropriate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.16 The premises are not maintained to a standard that consistently ensures the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The school does not give prompt attention to matters such as broken window restrictors, fallen roof tiles and a damaged fire escape.
- 2.17 The school provides a suitable supply of cold water for drinking and for flushing toilets, but it does not ensure that hot water is always at a safe temperature for pupils to use.
- 2.18 The water temperatures were rectified during the inspection, and arrangements made for a risk assessment of the roof to be carried out.
- 2.19 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation in paragraphs 23, 24, 26, 27 and 29 are met, but those in paragraphs 25 [maintenance of premises and accommodation] and 28 [water supply] are not met.

Action point 4

• the school must ensure that prompt attention is given to maintenance issues, in order to ensure pupils' welfare and safety [paragraph 25; EYFS 3.54]

Action point 5

• the school must check water temperatures regularly to ensure that they are always safe to use [paragraph 28(1)(d); EYFS 3.54]

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.20 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.22 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.
- 2.23 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.24 In light of the issues listed above, the proprietor does not ensure 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.
- 2.25 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.

Action point 6

 the proprietor must ensure that those with responsibility for leadership and management of the school develop the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, in particular those relating to health and safety, fire and the maintenance of the premises and accommodation, so that the independent school standards are met consistently and the well-being of pupils is actively promoted [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)]

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.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
 - Achievement in literacy and numeracy is excellent, with good skills and progression evidenced in other subjects.
 - Pupils converse fluently and express themselves very effectively in their writing, using thoughtful and imaginative language.
 - Pupils' independence and ability to take leadership in their learning are restricted by insufficient opportunities to develop and apply these attributes across all curriculum subjects.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
 - Many pupils embody the ethos of the school, demonstrating integrity, resilience, passion and respect.
 - The well-being of pupils is a major strength: they have a positive attitude towards their education.
 - Pupils are kind, responsible and quietly confident, behaving politely and thoughtfully.
 - Pupils' ability to take the initiative and work collaboratively is restricted by the limited opportunities offered to develop these skills.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
 - Develop whole-school systems to give pupils further opportunity to become more reflective and independent learners, taking greater responsibility for directing and improving their learning and performance.
 - Create more opportunities for pupil-initiated and pupil-led group and collaborative working.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 The knowledge, skills and understanding demonstrated by pupils across the curriculum are good overall, and in literacy and numeracy they are often excellent, reflecting the curricular emphasis that is given by the school's leadership. Pupils' achievement is good in most lessons, particularly where teachers use well targeted questioning, reflecting their detailed understanding of the needs of individual pupils. Pupils follow instructions carefully and often enthusiastically throughout the school. In the pre-prep, some pupils raptly created experiments to test the speed with which 3D shapes rolled, whilst EYFS children excitedly awaited their chance to be centre stage and contribute their choice of food to a class song. Pupils in the prep school responded with focused attention to tasks set in literacy and mathematics. Some older pupils were slower to proceed with tasks set. Pupils are very positive about their teaching, which they describe as helpful and supportive. Pupils' success in literacy and mathematics is supported by the detailed explanatory marking which indicates how to improve, to which the pupils respond enthusiastically. However, in otherwise highly positive questionnaire responses from parents and pupils during the inspection, a very small minority of pupils said that feedback and marking did not help them to improve across all subjects, and this was borne out by work scrutiny. In addition, although some lessons, especially in drama and music, enabled pupils to perform to very high levels, in some other lessons and subjects work was less challenging for the more able pupils.
- 3.6 Competency in numeracy is excellent, as a result of engaging challenge throughout the school. Pupils in many classes confidently explain their mathematical thinking. Younger pupils enthusiastically

responded to well-paced, proficient questioning, developing their learning about 2D and 3D shapes, correctly utilising mathematical vocabulary such as 'cuboid' and 'pyramid'. Staff have high expectations of all pupils. Able pupils, as well as those requiring support, are placed in groups that appropriately reflect their needs. This enables the class teacher to have a small group to work with, enabling pupils to receive more individualised attention.

- 3.7 Pupils have excellent communication skills, demonstrating in discussions that they are confident and articulate speakers. This was particularly evident during discussion with Year 4 and 5 pupils over lunch, where they spoke eloquently about their use of the school grounds. Additionally, pupils showed their strong oral communication skills in a range of lessons, for example through their detailed answers in an English lesson with older pupils analysing the features of recounts. Written communication is equally strong, with many examples of high-quality extended writing throughout the school. Whilst the written work of all pupils generally was of a good standard, older pupils demonstrated a particularly mature use of language and grammatical structures. This development is enabled by teaching that consistently and expertly engages the pupils and effectively structures work to develop their language skills, whatever their ability. Discussions with pupils and lesson observations showed how much pupils enjoy writing for various different purposes.
- 3.8 A significant proportion of pupils gain places at local selective schools. Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) results are above average for all schools in England across the years 2017 to 2019, and show particular strengths in reading comprehension. This is in part due to the emphasis on this in the curriculum, and in part to the quality of teaching in those subjects throughout the school. Almost all children in the EYFS reach the expected level of development at the end of their foundation stage, and some exceed it. For older pupils, standardised measures of progress, combined with evidence from lessons observation, work scrutiny and interviews with pupils, show that they make good progress throughout the school; they benefit from the system the leadership have recently introduced to track their progress, which enables teachers to plan their lessons to meet pupils' needs more precisely. Pupils with SEND benefit from carefully planned individual and classroom support which enables them to make good progress like their peers.
- 3.9 The pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons and talk extremely positively about the activities in which they are involved at school. This was very evident in a music and drama lesson where younger pupils had to move and respond to different pieces of music. All pupils actively took part and then gave very detailed explanations as to why they were moving in a particular manner. In a challenging French lesson about crêpes, younger pupils showed a highly positive attitude when joining in and following the discussion, which was largely conducted in French; Nursery pupils were utterly engaged in a lesson combining singing and learning about healthy foods. These attitudes are fostered by well-structured lessons and sympathetic and well-judged support from teachers. However, a very small minority of pupils stated in their questionnaires that they were not encouraged to think and learn for themselves. Some lesson observations and the book scrutiny bore this out, with opportunities missed to promote pupils to take leadership in their learning.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate satisfactory competence in ICT, with prep school pupils speaking with enthusiasm about how they enjoyed testing their knowledge of times tables using a computer programme. Older pupils talked about developing their keyboard skills and using software to create presentations on Mount Merapi and a topic of their choice. Limited word-processed work was observed in books, and pupils spoke of a restricted range of opportunities to practise and apply this skill. Leaders and proprietors have a clear and passionate vision to ensure that ICT is used to enhance learning in all areas. Recent investment by them has led to improvement in the strength and reliability of the broadband available in school.
- 3.11 The pupils' study skills are good, demonstrated, for example, in some pupils' responses to explanatory marking, improving or adding to their work. There is evidence of self-assessment in some books, but the process of editing and independently revising work is not routinely evident. Where this does happen, it helps the pupils to become reflective learners who take responsibility for their own

academic development. Study skills were effectively applied in a range of lessons, for example in a prep school drama lesson where groups and individuals were creating improvised sketches, and in a pre-prep maths lesson in which children were hypothesising and making predictions as to which shapes would roll better. The quality of the teaching is a significant factor in pupils' development of these skills. However, higher-order skills such as analysis, hypothesis and synthesis were not evident in every lesson in which they might have been successfully developed.

3.12 Pupils achieve success in many areas beyond the classroom. The whole school participates in an endof-year production at a theatre in a local large town, embracing and developing the pupils' love of acting, which was also manifest in their drama lessons. The school choir and the chamber choir sing with focus and sheer enjoyment and their skills are also deployed at a concert in a London stadium every two years. Half of the pupils eligible to learn a musical instrument do so, with many achieving good results in external music examinations. Others enthusiastically participate in various other activities, such as a local judo championship, and regional inter-school sports events. Support from and experience gained in the school has enabled successful audition for local productions. Leaders and proprietors avidly promote, support and follow these achievements, which are proudly tweeted and celebrated in school assemblies. Almost all parents agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate strong moral comprehension and social development, which are developed through the school leadership's focus upon the core values of respect, resilience, passion and integrity; these underpin all aspects of school life. Pupils appreciate how the excellent behaviour they display advantages both their relationships and their learning. They are kind and considerate towards others, perceiving this as a personal responsibility. This makes the school a warm and nurturing place where all pupils feel safe, secure and happy. Teachers' skilled communication of, and enthusiasm for, the school's ethos and values result in most pupils confidently applying those values both in lessons and in their social interactions. However, a few pupils struggled to articulate what resilience meant in practice. Pupils interact well with those in other year groups, and they contribute to the outstandingly caring ethos at the school; this is supported by the example constantly set by, and the procedures instituted by, senior leadership and management. Pupils value highly the nurture groups that underpin their strong self-understanding. Pupils clearly articulate their responsibilities to respect each other, understanding that these involve others' enjoyment of school activities. Rigorous, coherent and ambitious personal, social and health education (PSHE), combined with the pastoral support programme and strong relationships between staff and children, nurture a strong sense of community.
- 3.15 Pupils are not just physically healthy: they radiate cheerfulness and care for each other, in large part because of the priority attached by the leadership and management of the school to the fostering of their emotional well-being. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school actively promotes good behaviour and deals with all types of bullying effectively. This was borne out by behaviour observed during the inspection and interviews with the pupils. Pupils fully understand the importance of staying safe in different activities, such as when surfing the internet or walking near roads. They enjoy learning about diet throughout the school, from Nursery, where children acted and sang a song about a picnic, exploring together whether or not the food they had each contributed to the basket was healthy, to some of the oldest pupils, who enjoyed discussing the need to eat healthily and have a balanced diet.
- 3.16 Pupils show mature self-understanding and self-discipline as a result of pastoral support when there are disagreements. Their quiet self-confidence develops in part because of this understanding of how to cope effectively with conflict. Whilst pupils understand how to improve their academic work, they

do not routinely take responsibility for going back and actively making improvements in response to marking or feedback. Prep school pupils all knew that passion is one of the school's four core values, and that they should follow their passion, but a number of pupils were unclear what theirs was. Pupils do not all fully develop the skills of thinking for themselves, at times demonstrating reliance on staff indicating how they should respond, rather than initiating this themselves.

- 3.17 Pupils very much appreciate the natural world, especially the school's attractive environment. They explained how they enjoy using the grounds during break times, as seen during the inspection, where they made full use of the opportunities afforded by the play areas to engage in inclusive, energetic and imaginative outdoor games and play activities. Pupils respond keenly when teachers encourage them to be reflective and, on a number of occasions, including during an upper school lesson, demonstrated their appreciation of the skills and opportunities they possess. Pupils in the middle years quickly and adamantly articulated how much they valued friends and family over money.
- 3.18 Pupils can work well collaboratively, as seen when they discussed smoking, listening attentively to each other, valuing the opinions of their peers and developing the conversation to include the identification of other health and well-being issues such as mobile phone and drug use. Pupils also worked together particularly effectively in sport and drama lessons. They enjoy working with learning partners and are frequently given the opportunity to do this across the school. Some older pupils, however, reluctant to engage with the views or approaches of others, struggle to work collaboratively on classroom tasks. In discussion, younger prep school pupils demonstrated some difficulty in understanding and articulating the benefits of collaboration, perceiving it solely in terms of how it might benefit them in the future if they were unable to do something by themselves.
- 3.19 Many pupils show a good understanding of the impact of the decisions they make with regard to their behaviour. This comprehension is significantly underpinned by teachers encouraging pupils to reflect on both their successful and their unsuccessful decisions. Pupils ably demonstrated their understanding when they discussed in class the impact on their lives and well-being of decisions relating to habitual behaviours and potentially addictive activities. Pupils in the chess club are aware of the benefit they gain in their strategic thinking. In relation to pupils' academic decision-making, learning is often directed by the teachers: pupils' ability to take responsibility for their learning through more open-ended tasks and study is not always fully realised.
- 3.20 Pupils show considerable respect for the views of those with different values and beliefs, and clearly value diversity. They learn about the beliefs and key principles of the world's major faiths in their religious education lessons during which they produce well written work; their understanding is reinforced by regular assemblies, sometimes led by the children, which include focus on different aspects of the school's core values. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are well integrated and conversations with pupils show that they have respect for the values of others. This is fostered by the school's ethos and by the wider curriculum, for example through the celebration of Chinese New Year in the EYFS.
- 3.21 Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the need to contribute to the lives of others. The school provides opportunities which encourage them to fundraise and to appreciate how fortunate they are; recently, they have keenly collected money for a school in Ghana and enjoyed fundraising for the deaf. Whilst some enterprising pupils organised a bake sale and a sponsored haircut, most were more passive, focusing in discussion on money brought from home at the behest of teachers, rather than devising methods of raising money themselves. Pupils benefit from competing at fixtures with other schools, singing at a nearby care home and putting on an annual performance at a local theatre. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and helping their peers, for example through the school's Eco Council, where they advocate their chosen environmental issues.

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, with the proprietor's chief executive officer and with two governors. They also observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and registration. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the 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

Ms Rhiannon Williams	Reporting inspector
Mr Guy Barrett	Compliance team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Robert Francis	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)