INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE HABERDASHERS' ASKE'S BOYS' PREP SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

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The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' Prep School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School/College	**The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' Prep School**
DfE Number	**919/6221**
Address	**The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' Prep School** **Butterfly Lane** **Elstree** **Borehamwood** **Hertfordshire** **WD6 3AF**
Telephone Number	**020 82661700**
Fax Number	**020 82661800**
Email Address	**Mercer_Y@habsboys.org.uk**
Head	**Miss Yvonne Mercer**
Chair of the Aske Board	**Mr Mark Powell**
Age Range	**6 to 11**
Total Number of Pupils	**288**
Gender of Pupils	**Boys**
Numbers by Age	**5-11: 288**
Inspection dates	**08 Nov 2011 to 09 Nov 2011** **05 Dec 2011 to 07 Dec 2011**

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PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule.* The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

(a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
(b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
(c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
(d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
(e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
(f) Premises and accommodation
(g) Provision of information
(h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

(i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA)
(ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation
(iii) Corporal punishment

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

(i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
(ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
(iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
(iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

1.1 The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' Prep School is part of The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School which opened in 1690 following an endowment by a merchant haberdasher, Robert Aske, to establish a school for the education of children of impecunious members of his profession. In 1961, the whole school moved to its current position on a 100-acre site in Elstree which includes a minor stately home, Aldenham House. The girls' school shares the site and all three schools are governed by the Aske board; the Boys School Committee oversees the boys school with one governor linked to the prep school.

1.2 The preparatory school is a day school that provides education for 288 boys from the age of six to eleven. Pupils come from a wide area of North London and South Hertfordshire parents are mainly from professional and business backgrounds. The school seeks to develop a sense of community and shared values. Emphasis is placed on challenging bright boys to achieve the highest standards in their academic work and in their activities outside lessons. The school sees a close and harmonious relationship between boys, staff and parents as essential in preparing the boys to have a fulfilled life. The pre-prep school, a section of the prep school, was established in 2007 on a separate site for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Since the previous inspection the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been expanded.

1.3 The ability profile of the school, as indicated by standardised tests, is above the national average, with a significant number of pupils having an ability that is far above average. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Ten pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Although the school is culturally diverse, no pupils need extra support for their spoken English.

1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

2.1 Pupils are very well educated in line with the school's aims. The pupils' achievement is excellent in their academic subjects and activities. Results in national tests are far above the national average for maintained primary schools, and pupils show good progress in their work in relation to those of similar ability. Pupils are highly effective learners and have excellent attitudes to their learning. The curriculum is excellent and closely linked to the school's aims. A wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities is provided. More able pupils are challenged and achieve high standards. Pupils with individual needs are well supported and consequently make good progress. The pupils' success is promoted by the excellent teaching they receive. Detailed assessments are made of the pupils' achievements and progress and are used effectively to plan work and to track progress. Marking is thorough. Reference in comments to the targets that pupils are working towards is not wholly consistent across subjects

2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent and fostered by the school's positive ethos. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Relationships between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils are excellent. Outstanding pastoral care enables pupils to have a happy and successful educational experience. The extra-curricular activities contribute significantly to their personal development. Rigorous attention is paid to the safeguarding of pupils and to health and safety.

2.3 Governance is good. Governors have set a clear educational direction for the school and ensure its values and aims are promoted. They are highly supportive of the prep school. Finances are managed prudently. The structure of the Boys' School Committee provides a liaison governor for the prep school. The arrangements for reporting back to the main committee are not defined enough to provide all governors with sufficient insight into the working of the school. Leadership and management are excellent. The Prep Leadership Team (PLT) is highly effective and the teamwork of the staff and their commitment to the pupils is outstanding. The improvements suggested in the previous report have been dealt with diligently. Parents' replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires were highly favourable and inspectors agreed with these views. Links with parents are excellent.

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2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. In the marking of pupils' work, improve the consistency of comments about pupil progress towards the targets that have been set.

2. Ensure that the Boys' School Committee puts suitable arrangements into place for the formal reception of information from the liaison governor.

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3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

3.1 In response to the school's key aim to challenge bright boys to achieve the highest standards, the pupils' overall achievement is excellent at all ages. Pupils are highly successful in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills in their academic work and wider activities. They are highly articulate and listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. They express their views and ideas very clearly and debate effectively, for example when they make a case in the school council. The pupils read fluently. They have a secure grasp of mathematics and apply their skills in other subjects, such as science and design technology. Pupils demonstrate a logical approach to their work and make good progress in all subjects. The pupils' ICT skills are well developed and are used to good effect, for example in mathematics and to research information in history. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The pupils' creative skills are highly developed, for example a pupil interested in dance provided the choreography for part of a production to be performed for parents.

3.2 Pupils enjoy considerable success in a wide range of activities, including the junior mathematics challenge. They achieve excellent standards in drama and music examinations. Pupils show high levels of skills in physical activities and are successful in many sports, at regional and national levels. The school has been the Hertfordshire Under 11 Schools Cross Country team winners on four occasions since 2002.

3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at the age of 11 have been far above the national average for maintained primary schools. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress as they are suitably challenged in line with the school's aims. The few pupils with SEND are well supported and make good progress in line with their individual education plans. The pupils are successful in gaining places at the senior school of their choice, often proceeding to the senior school, as well as gaining scholarships to other senior schools.

3.4 Pupils are highly effective learners and show exemplary attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic and keen to improve the standards they attain. Pupils want to do their best and attain high grades. They respond positively and enthusiastically in conversation with their teachers about improving their work.

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3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

3.5 Pupils benefit from an excellent curriculum and programme of activities that are carefully designed to match their needs and interests. These are highly effective in the school's provision for the pupils' academic, creative and sporting development. The curriculum is challenging and broad; it enables pupils to achieve high standards in line with the school's aims. All the requisite subjects are taught, as well as French, German and Spanish in Year 6 in line with the policy of the senior school as a whole. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned and taught as a subject by form teachers who value the opportunity to discuss a range of pertinent issues with their pupils. A strength of the programme is the opportunities it provides for pupils to speak openly about their feelings, knowing that all opinions will be valued and respected. The pupils' personal development is enriched by these opportunities. A significant improvement since the previous inspection is the opportunity for pupils to use ICT widely across the curriculum.

3.6 The curriculum is suitable for pupils of all ages, abilities and attitudes. It is specially tailored to ensure that pupils, including those with high levels of ability, are presented with academic challenges to enable them to achieve the highest standards. In line with the school's aims, pupils are also given the opportunity to experience a range of practical activities that promote deeper levels of understanding and encourage critical and analytical thinking, such as analysis of data. Pupils with SEND are carefully identified and provided with individual plans suited to their needs. These are communicated to staff to enable them to give effective support.

3.7 The curriculum is planned effectively. Enthusiastic subject co-ordinators take their responsibilities very seriously. Their careful and imaginative planning not only ensures high standards of achievement but also generates enjoyment of learning by the pupils. Specialist teaching enhances the curriculum; this develops in scope as pupils progress through the school. The curriculum for the older pupils is both demanding and highly stimulating, preparing them extremely well for their move to the senior school. The curriculum is supported and enriched by an extensive programme of visits to theatres, museums and residential visits.

3.8 The provision and range of extra-curricular activities are outstanding, and reflect the school's aim to encourage excellence across wide areas of activity. Parents and pupils in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires endorse the wide range of activities. High quality opportunities are provided to develop the pupils' creative and sporting talents. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to sing and play in ensembles and participate in drama productions. Other opportunities include learning about origami, led by a pupil, table tennis, art, and a 'veggie patch' club. Pupils who would benefit from further support to enable them to improve their understanding and skills are invited to attend subject surgeries where they are encouraged and helped to grow in confidence. Pupils speak highly of these opportunities.

3.9 A number of useful opportunities exist for the school to link with the wider community through connections with sports associations and by sending harvest gifts to disadvantaged members of the community. Pupils are very active in fund raising for charities.

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3.(c) The contribution of teaching

3.10 Excellent teaching and high expectation combined with the pupils' keenness to learn, enables pupils to make good progress. This quality of teaching represents a considerable improvement in consistency in teaching since the previous inspection. The teaching enables the significant proportion of more able pupils to achieve high standards in line with a key aim of the school. In both the pre-prep and prep schools, teaching offers consistent encouragement to pupils to make the most of their intellectual, physical and creative talents. Pupils make good progress in response to challenging, enthusiastic teaching which takes place in a highly supportive environment. Older pupils made rapid progress in developing their skills in writing when asked to prepare instructions for undertaking magical illusions. A culture of improvement is deeply embedded in the teaching and in the life of the school.

3.11 The teachers' planning is detailed and thorough and takes proper account of what pupils have learnt before and uses this information well. Emphasis is placed on the development of the pupils' problem solving strategies from Year 1 onwards. Pupils commented in conversations that their teachers were keen to help them. Pupils' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires confirm their positive attitudes to the teaching they receive.

3.12 A wide range of teaching methods is employed successfully to encourage pupils to think for themselves and to capture their interest. The widespread use of collaborative work enhances the pupils' discussions and adds to their personal development. The electronic whiteboards in classrooms are used to good effect. Effective use enables pupils to share their thinking. Lessons are well paced with a brisk purposeful start. The teachers' questioning consolidates learning effectively. Teaching successfully uses open-ended questions to challenge the pupils. In other respects, excellent use is made of resources of good quality. Effective use is made of the subject knowledge of the teachers.

3.13 The pupils' work is regularly and conscientiously marked. Pupils are often provided with praise and encouragement as to how they might improve their work. Where marking is at its best, comments are made on the pupils' progress towards the targets that have been set. However, this excellent practice is not used consistently across different subjects. A wide range of assessments, including standardised tests, effectively supports the teaching. Excellent use is made of the information from these assessments to plan work and track the pupils' progress.

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4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

4.1 The personal development of the pupils is excellent and entirely in keeping with the school's aims. The school is highly successful in achieving its aim of developing a community with shared values. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well advanced. Parents strongly endorse the attitudes and values the school promotes.

4.2 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They develop a secure understanding of the importance of religious ideas to believers and they show tolerance and respect for the faiths represented in the school's multi-faith community. Pupils gain a strong awareness of world religions other than their own through class assemblies and their work in religious studies and PSHE. For example, in an art lesson one pupil chose to base his stained glass window design around a religious artefact. Pupils develop their spiritual understanding from the many opportunities for spiritual enhancement in art, drama and music. They have a well-developed sense of self-esteem.

4.3 The moral development of pupils is excellent. Pupils are very aware of what is right and wrong, not only in terms of keeping to the rules but also in a moral sense. Older pupils show a good understanding of why racism is morally wrong, for example when they talk about the stand made by Nelson Mandella. Pupils have a set of shared values underpinned by the school creed and they know, understand and respect the classroom codes of conduct. The 'Gold Book for Excellence' shows many acts of kindness to others. The pupils recognise the need to help those less fortunate than themselves.

4.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent social skills. From the youngest age, they show a high degree of social awareness. Pupils are caring and considerate, courteous and helpful to all. They contribute highly to the strong sense of community found in the school. They talk, explain their thoughts and discuss ideas with peers and adults in a clear and confident manner. They very much appreciate the importance of friendliness and tolerance. Pupils have valuable opportunities to take on responsibility and undertake these conscientiously. They welcome opportunities to act as form captains and school council representatives. They thoroughly enjoy helping with, or running, clubs for younger pupils and peers, and acting as 'hosts' at the school's Open Morning. Pupils have a strong sense of community and use the school council to influence life at school positively, for example through working hard to negotiate more halal, kosher and vegetarian options in lunch, as requested by the pupil body. Through activities such as this, pupils accept social responsibility and learn what it means to be a citizen. They gain a sound understanding of public institutions in their PSHE lessons.

4.5 The pupils' cultural development is well advanced. Pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds work and play harmoniously together. They display a strong interest in, and respect for, their own and other cultures. Pupils learn a great deal about other cultures from each other. Many consider this to be a strength of the school. They gain knowledge of other cultures from their visits to other countries, such as France and Ireland, and from their studies in geography and languages. The pupils' cultural development is also enhanced by visits to museums and theatres.

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

4.6 The school's pastoral care is excellent and makes a highly significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. The school is successful in its wish to provide pupils with effective support and guidance. Rigorous arrangements are in place to ensure their welfare, health and safety. Those parents who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires were highly appreciative of the care the school provides for their children. The pupils' responses showed that they were especially appreciative of the care the school provides.

4.7 Teachers provide excellent support. They know their pupils very well. Pupils appreciate being able to discuss matters with their form teachers. The school's pastoral arrangements are highly effective and carefully thought through, particularly with regard to the great attention paid to detail. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the system whereby pupils in Year 3 have a 'buddy' in Year 6 to help them settle into the prep school. Effective use is made of the school's intranet to keep all staff fully informed of the pupils' pastoral needs. Excellent relationships between pupils and teachers, and between pupils themselves, add significantly to the quality of the care.

4.8 The arrangements for promoting good behaviour are well thought through and regarded by pupils as being fair and in their interest. Through their relationships and courtesy, the staff provide an excellent model for their pupils. Thorough records are kept of the few instances when pupils have had difficulty in managing their behaviour. Comprehensive attention is paid to the prevention of bullying and harassment. Pupils reported that in their view instances of bullying are rare. They are confident that were it to occur, it would be taken very seriously and dealt with swiftly.

4.9 Rigorous attention is paid to safeguarding pupils and promoting their health and well-being. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and is implemented conscientiously. Recruitment checks are made systematically on all adults and recorded on a central register. The required training for the designated officers and staff is up to date. Protection against fire is thorough. All fire prevention appliances and evacuation procedures are tested regularly. Detailed risk assessments are in place for educational visits and for other health and safety matters. Good provision is made for pupils who are taken ill, or have an accident. Attendance and admissions registers are completed correctly and stored appropriately.

4.10 Good attention is paid to encouraging pupils to live healthily, for example in science where they learn what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils make the most of the many opportunities to take physical exercise and have a good understanding of the importance of exercise. Meals taken at lunchtime are nutritious and offer pupils a wide choice. Care is taken to check the choices being made to ensure pupils have a balanced diet. Pupils report that they enjoy the meals provided.

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5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The quality of the governance of the prep school by the Boys School Committee is good. The governors form a strong and effective team with wide experience in education, finance and the law. Governor training is comprehensive, and includes matters of child protection. The governors are very supportive of the prep and pre-prep schools. They undertake their responsibilities for child protection and health and safety of the pupils effectively but formal structures to ensure they receive detailed information about the prep school are limited. Governors receive detailed information about the school formally once a year when the head of the prep school attends a meeting of the board and presents her annual report. Two other, termly, written reports by the head of the senior school to the committee provide governors with some insight into the prep school but this lacks regularity. The head of the prep school additionally attends, and provide reports, for other committees such as that for teaching and learning. A governor has been designated to act as a liaison governor with the prep school. Regular visits are made to the prep and the pre-prep, and meetings are held with the staff and lessons observed. The valuable insights gained are communicated to governors on an informal basis but this does not ensure all governors are suitably briefed. A number of changes to the board's structure have taken place since the previous inspection which has helped to raise the pupils' attainment. These include the formation of sub-committees to monitor and support teaching and learning in the classroom and ICT development.

5.2 Finances are managed very prudently as seen in the good quality of the accommodation, and human and material resources provided for the prep and pre-prep schools. In addition, the pupils gain much from the specialist facilities provided in the senior school, for example the sports and music provision. The buildings are well maintained. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were supportive of the governance of the school.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

5.3 The leadership and management of the school are excellent. All those involved in leadership have established a clear educational direction firmly rooted in the school's aims. The hallmarks of this leadership are the attention paid to detail in all aspects of the school's work. In addition, a unity of purpose and harmony has been established where all staff are fully committed to provide the best for their pupils. Teamwork is exemplary. The prep leadership team (PLT) is highly effective in setting priorities to ensure that important matters are dealt with as well as those that are urgent.

5.4 High quality arrangements are in place and implemented, to evaluate the work of the school. Detailed oversight of the pupils' achievement and their personal development, together with the quality of teaching and pastoral care enables the PLT to have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need improvement. These are reflected in the detailed plan for the development of the whole school. The school does not rest on its laurels and is keen to improve further. The leadership and management of subjects are effective and contribute significantly to the levels of the pupils' achievement. The leadership and management of the pre-prep are of high quality. Very effective arrangements have

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been established to ensure that the pre-prep is fully part of the prep school despite the considerable distance between the sites. The leadership in the senior school is highly supportive of the pre-prep and prep which contributes to effective liaison between all the schools. The management of the curriculum from Year 1 to Year 6 is of high quality as is that of pastoral care.

5.5 Excellent attention is given to staff development. Training has been a significant factor in the improved use of ICT and in the greater consistency in teaching. Thorough arrangements for the performance review of staff are in place and implemented effectively. Management at all levels has been successful in securing and supporting sufficient high quality staff. A well-developed induction programme is in place and implemented. Staff are suitably trained for their roles in child protection, welfare, health and safety. Thorough arrangements are in place to ensure legal compliance regarding the suitability of staff, volunteers, and governors.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

5.6 The quality of the school's links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent, fulfilling its aim to seek a close and harmonious relationship with parents. Parents are highly supportive of the school as they indicated in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They are particularly appreciative of the progress made by their children, the range of extra-curricular activities offered, the quality of communication with the school, the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and values, and the management of the school. Inspectors concur with these views. A small minority of responses raised concerns about the way the school deals with parental concerns. Inspection evidence is that the school deals with such concerns diligently. The school's complaints policy is available to parents on its website and meets minimum requirements. The inspection team found that the threshold for when a complaint becomes formal and the timescales for handling complaints could be more clearly expressed to support the school in resolving concerns quickly and parents in finding resolution.

5.7 Parents and prospective parents are provided with a wide range of excellent information. The required regulatory information, including policies and procedures is posted on the website. Through the website and its associated parental portal for Year 6, parents gain access to information about their children's learning programmes and recommendations for suitable associated activities. In addition, parents receive well-produced newsletters, handbooks and magazines. Parents and staff communicate regularly by e-mail or telephone and staff are available for discussion in their classrooms after school every day. 'Drop in' sessions are provided. Appointments are also made for meeting members of staff at mutually convenient times. Curriculum evenings are held at the beginning of each year. In Year 3, parents are given the opportunity to get to know parents of a pupil in Year 6 as part of the buddy system. Formal parents' evenings are held in the autumn and spring terms and a comprehensive written report is sent home each term providing valuable insight into the progress and performance of their children, including advice for improvement. Targets set for individual pupils are shared with parents at the start of each academic year; these are reviewed later in the year when new targets are set.

5.8 Parents are actively involved in the life of the school; attending concerts, plays and sporting events. A significant number of parent volunteers help within the school, including running the library, hearing reading, and assisting with off-site activities.

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An opportunity for parent feedback is provided in the form of a whole school survey which takes place once every 2 to 3 years.

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

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INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Rod Sharman	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Aylward	Head IAPS school
Mrs Philippa Foster	Retired Head IAPS school
Mrs Stephanie Salter	Deputy Head IAPS school

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