

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Aldro School

June 2023

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School's Details

School	Aldro School			
DfE number	936/6110			
Registered charity number	312072			
Address	Aldro School Lombard Street Shackleford Godalming Surrey GU8 6AS			
Telephone number	01483 810266			
Email address	hmsec@aldro.org			
Headmaster	Mr Chris Carlier			
Chair of governors	Mr Tim Johns			
Proprietor Aldro		Ildro School Educational Trust Ltd.		
Age range	7 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	234			
	Day pupils	160	Boarders	74
	Juniors	161	Seniors	73
Inspection dates	6 – 8 June 2023			

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1. Background Information

About the school

1.1 Aldro School is a day and boarding co-educational preparatory school. Founded in Eastbourne in 1898, it moved to Shackleford in 1940. The school is governed by Aldro School Educational Trust Limited, a charitable trust and company limited by guarantee. Boarders are accommodated in two boarding houses based within the main school building. The school appointed a new Head in 2019 and became co-educational in 2021.

What the school seeks to do

1.2 The school aims to provide an outstanding, broad and happy education for all pupils that will instil in them a life-long love of learning and make them positive contributors to society. It seeks to encourage curiosity, critical thinking, independence of thought and strength of character through an innovative learning experience and inspirational teaching. The school aims to create a vibrant boarding environment that promotes independence and responsibility as well as providing outstanding pastoral care within a nurturing family environment underpinned by Christian values and teaching.

About the pupils

1.3 Pupils come from a range of social, cultural and professional backgrounds. Approximately one third of pupils board part-time, weekly or as full boarders. Some of the full-time boarders come from overseas. Standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability profile of the school is above average for the tests used. The school has identified 51 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include mild specific learning difficulties. Thirty-four of these pupils receive additional support within the school. No pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 45 pupils, 28 of whom receive additional support. The school modifies the curriculum and has a scholarship form for pupils identified as more able. Pupils identified with talents in the creative arts and sport are supported in developing their abilities within the curriculum and through co-curricular provision.

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. 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 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 own framework for assessment] confirms 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 education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, 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, and 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' attitudes to learning are outstanding.
 - Pupils maintain an excellent rate of progress in mathematics and English throughout the school.
 - Pupils demonstrate outstanding speaking and listening skills, their reading is at a high level, and they write fluently.
 - Pupils develop excellent skills in number and the wider aspects of mathematics.
 - Pupils develop excellent study skills using ICT competently to support their learning.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils appreciate strongly the non-material aspects of life; they uphold the values of kindness, respect and integrity which encompass the spirit of the school.
 - Pupils demonstrate exceptionally high levels of self-understanding, self-confidence and emotional maturity for their age.
 - Pupils have an excellent moral understanding; they demonstrate kindness to one another and a mature understanding of the impact of their words and actions.
 - Pupils' social awareness is excellent; they are developing their understanding of the school becoming co-educational and are contributing successfully to the extension of their community.
 - Pupils understand how to be physically and mentally healthy, particularly in terms of diet, exercise and maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
 - Enable different pupil groups to continue to develop their social relationships and understanding of others.

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 school successfully achieves its aim of encouraging pupils' curiosity, critical thinking, independence of thought and strength of character through an innovative learning experience and

inspirational teaching. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents stated that teaching, including any online provision, and the boarding experience, enables their children to make progress. Governors know the school extremely well. They bring a wide range of experience and expertise providing strong support in all aspects of the school's life and development. They also provide appropriate challenge as part of supporting the school's culture of effective self-evaluation and of continual improvement.

- 3.6 Most pupils attain above the national average in English and mathematics compared to the standardised scores for the tests. Scrutiny of results indicates that by the end of Year 8 most pupils attain above their potential scores with many attaining well above. Pupils of all ages and abilities make excellent progress overall, as reflected in externally standardised tests, pupils' written and digital work, discussion with pupils and lesson observations. The achievement of pupils with SEND or EAL is outstanding, as shown by the excellent progress they make in relation to their starting points. This is due to the careful assessment of the pupils by highly skilled and experienced SEND and EAL staff and the implementation by all teachers of interventions identified by this process.
- 3.7 Pupils throughout the school develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum, benefiting from well-chosen resources and specialist facilities including for the arts, science and sport. Strong contributory factors to high achievement are the expertise and enthusiasm of teachers combined with high expectations, an extensive curriculum where every subject is valued, and planning matched to pupils' abilities. During discussions, pupils demonstrated deep interest in their learning, explaining clearly the knowledge, skills and understanding that they had developed over time. They stated emphatically that teachers encourage them and motivate them to learn and to think for themselves. They appreciate guidance from teachers on how to plan their work and specific marking and feedback which helps them to evaluate their progress and to continually improve.
- 3.8 Pupils develop high-level scientific skills including observation, classification, prediction and measuring. This is in response to a focus on the practical and real-life aspects of science, the correct use of technical language and guidance on how to conduct experiments safely. This was exemplified by younger junior pupils who accurately constructed a skeleton, using elastic bands to reconstruct muscles moving bones in the arm. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of physical, human and social geography as seen in older junior pupils' field studies. Their high-quality electronic group presentations enabled them to share their extensive knowledge and understanding of coastal erosion and the engineering techniques that may be used to manage it. In history, pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of chronology and changes over time and the impact of significant events on humanity. Pupils demonstrated an extensive knowledge of life in Ancient Egypt effectively drawing upon their recent visit to a museum of antiquities and a range of resources. All pupils contribute to the excellent singing, which is a significant feature of the school's chapel services. Pupils' balance, gross and fine motor skills are highly developed through a wide range of sports. Those who require additional support to develop their balance and motor integration benefit greatly from a specific programme implemented by SEND and PE staff. Pupils of all ages use a wide range of tools, materials and techniques to produce excellent work in art and design technology. They plan and refine their work meticulously to produce outstanding products that are displayed attractively throughout the school. These include portrait and landscape work, ceramic money boxes and painted silk ties.
- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate outstanding speaking and listening skills. Throughout the school they listen and respond respectfully to adults and their peers, expressing themselves confidently with sensitive consideration of others. They articulate their thoughts and ideas maturely using a wide range of advanced vocabulary. During discussions, pupils listened intently to their partners when sharing and reflecting on their work and what helps them to learn. By the time they leave the school, the vast majority of pupils read confidently at a very high level of comprehension. These high levels of reading are particularly developed through the promotion of reading by leaders and staff as part of the culture of the school. This includes using the library and the school's reading scheme to accelerate reading and boarders reading for 30 minutes before bedtime. By Year 8, most pupils use a variety of writing

- frameworks to plan their work effectively. They write at great depth for a variety of purposes using a wide range of vocabulary with accurate spelling and punctuation. This was exemplified by older pupils writing to the headmaster regarding the benefits of appointing a kindness monitor.
- 3.10 As they move through the school pupils develop excellent skills in number and the wider aspects of mathematics. They make confident mental calculations using the four rules of number and accurately use a range of written methods to solve challenging problems including those linked to time, measure, shape and data handling. Pupils throughout the school spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their enjoyment of mathematics. Older pupils appreciate how mathematics enhances their ability to apply their knowledge in other subjects, as exemplified when calculating moments in science in order to understand the turning effect of a force around a fixed point. Younger pupils confidently engage in a wide range of practical mathematical challenges, as exemplified when describing a range of 3D shapes when using a feely bag. They explained clearly the properties of the shapes and how prisms have identical bases and equal cross-sections.
- 3.11 Pupils use and apply information and communication technology (ICT) to a high level through systematic well-planned discrete computing lessons as well as across the curriculum. Pupils use ICT confidently for a range of purposes as seen when they used an application to identify plants and birdsong during a woodland walk and in a coding project where their program was transmitted from the international space station.
- 3.12 Pupils develop an excellent range of high-level study skills which they use effectively in their lessons and when preparing for examinations. This demonstrates the school's success in fulfilling its aim to promote pupils' curiosity and critical thinking. During discussions, they spoke maturely about being responsible for their learning. Most plan and organise their work effectively, drawing knowledge discerningly from a wide range of sources. They hypothesise and synthesise information effectively, going on to apply their knowledge to new situations. Pupils ask challenging questions, arguing and reasoning logically whilst still being creative and making connections. This is demonstrated in the excellent independent projects produced by older pupils. Pupils' exceptionally high level of independent research includes asking challenging questions such as the extent to which Aristotle changed the modern way of thinking and the importance of the golden ratio. Their projects are well structured, coherently written and based on their research evidence with comprehensive conclusions that take differing viewpoints into account. Critical and challenging support from teachers and mentors throughout the project enables pupils to achieve levels of research and criticality well above their age group.
- 3.13 Pupils consistently achieve entry to the senior school of their choice, successfully undertaking a range of entrance requirements. They have an excellent measure of success in academic, music, art, drama and sport scholarships and in competitions at regional and national level including cricket, pistol shooting, rugby, cross-country, athletics, swimming, chess, golf and tennis. Throughout the school, pupils develop the ability to perform skilfully and confidently to a wide range of audiences including for assemblies and productions. The quality of music and drama performances reflects the large numbers of pupils who play an instrument and achieve highly in externally assessed music and drama examinations. This wide-ranging level of achievement is linked strongly to the school's enrichment programme and boarding opportunities, where pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities which are carefully planned and led by enthusiastic staff and coaches.
- 3.14 Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are enthusiastic and ambitious learners. Across the curriculum, they achieve highly in their individual work and in collaboration with others. During discussions, pupils stated that it is important to learn from mistakes, to have a go and keep trying. Older pupils said that they understand that there are different ways of learning including times that require intense study such as when revising for examinations. Boarders stated appreciatively that the boarding staff support them in all aspects of their learning, ensuring that they have the time, resources and support to succeed at a high level.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.16 Pupils show exceptionally high levels of self-understanding, self-confidence and emotional maturity for their age. This is because leaders, governors and staff lead by example, supporting the personal development of pupils and an ethos based on the values of kindness, respect and integrity, where everyone is valued and supported. During discussions pupils stated appreciatively that they are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings when speaking with teachers and when responding to questionnaires. Boarders stated strongly that boarding supports them in developing their social skills, responsibility and independence. Older pupils willingly take on leadership responsibilities within the boarding house, working with boarding staff to create a family ethos where everyone is included. Pupils are confident that their teachers pay attention to their views and opinions and that they will always be given an explanation for decisions made. Pupils evaluate their work effectively, identifying their strengths and areas for development. Throughout the school, pupils are very enthusiastic about their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons, stating that these support them in understanding their emotions and how to develop self-discipline, self-esteem and resilience. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that the school helps them to prepare for their next steps including looking forward to their new schools. They value the opportunity provided by the careers curriculum to consider areas they may wish to develop in the future. These high levels of self-reflection are linked strongly to the school's ethos of encouraging honest opinion and promotion of independence.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate well-developed decision-making skills. They understand the process of decision-making, including evaluating arguments for and against a particular viewpoint. This mature understanding arises from a wide range of opportunities given to pupils to make decisions as part of their learning, boarding, activities, voluntary tasks and recreation as well as more formally in the school council. Effective decision-making skills were observed when younger pupils worked as a team to create a den or a trail in the woodland area. Once reminded of the safety rules they collaboratively made a range of decisions about what makes a good shelter or trail including waterproofing the den and making the trail easy to follow. Older pupils spoke with insight about how decisions they make now may impact their well-being and future opportunities such as which school they go to.
- 3.18 Pupils appreciate strongly the non-material aspects of life which are promoted successfully through the school's PSHE programme, the curriculum, pastoral and the school's celebration of qualities such as kindness, helpfulness and thoughtfulness. During discussions, pupils demonstrated a deep understanding of spirituality, stating that it is what is in your heart and your belief. They value playing in the woods and the beauty of their surroundings as well as mindful activities and time for reflection including when attending chapel. The development of spirituality is effectively threaded through the curriculum. For example, in music pupils appreciate the connection between the blues and the deep emotions expressed by those who had been enslaved and in art pupils relate spiritually to the work of artists and their peers. Theology, philosophy and religious education supports pupils effectively in thinking deeply and in reflecting on their own beliefs and those of others. Pupils say that the school helps them to appreciate what is really important in life, particularly caring for others.
- 3.19 Pupils have an excellent moral understanding. The vast majority of parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaires stated that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Pupils speak with conviction about the school values, particularly the importance of being kind. They stated that rules and laws are important and demonstrate a mature understanding of the school rules and why they are necessary. Pupils say that most are well behaved and are extremely keen to earn rewards in support of their houses. Pupils understanding of morality and the development of responsibility for their own behaviour is supported strongly by the school's approach to discipline, which is underpinned by understanding the individual, the reasons for a particular behaviour and how all concerned can put things right and move forward.

- 3.20 Pupils' social awareness is excellent, contributing effectively to the development of the school as a coeducational community. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaires stated that the school helps their children to develop strong teamwork and social skills and that the boarding experience supports their children's personal development. A majority of male pupils stated in the questionnaires that they felt there was favouritism towards female pupils. A small minority of female pupils stated that they did not always feel that they were treated with respect by male pupils. During wide-ranging discussions, male and female pupils stated that they felt these inequalities strongly when the school first became co-educational. However, they reported that the school has supported their needs throughout the process by ensuring that male and female pupils have equal access to the curriculum and activities and through continual discussion and mentoring. As a result, they have taken positive steps towards developing increasingly natural and positive friendships irrespective of gender. Male and female pupils spoke strongly about the importance of equality and respect and were observed interacting positively during break times including when playing cricket and football.
- 3.21 Pupils make an excellent contribution to the lives of others within the school, the local community and wider society. They willingly volunteer to take on responsibilities within the school and through the school council identify charities they would like to support. They appreciate strongly the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves as they are supported by staff in finding out about the purpose of the charities they support and the impact they can have. During discussions, pupils spoke movingly about their support for a school in Malawi and the homeless. They stated that they appreciate their own circumstances more through these links and consider themselves lucky to have water, good food and a lovely school.
- 3.22 Pupils demonstrate an exceptional understanding of the meaning of diversity and equality and the importance of appreciating and learning from the beliefs and cultures of others. They develop this mature understanding through assemblies, the curriculum, the PSHE curriculum, their boarding experiences and role modelling from adults within the school. Pupils treat one another with kindness and respect appreciating the importance of the language used when interacting with others. Pupils told the inspectors about the support they have given to refugees, stating this has made them want to learn more as it is heart breaking to learn of people losing their homes.
- 3.23 Throughout the school, pupils know how to stay safe. They understand how to be physically and mentally healthy, particularly in terms of diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle. Through a well-balanced PSHE and relationships and sex education programme, they understand the importance of developing positive and safe relationships and potential risks including online dangers. During discussions, older pupils were confident about what is meant by personal boundaries and consent and the importance of speaking to a trusted adult if they are worried or concerned. Well-planned and unhurried recreation times enable pupils to enjoy their meals, rest, reflect and benefit physically and mentally from interacting and playing with their friends.

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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 the chair of governors and the governor responsible for safeguarding, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and chapel. Inspectors visited boarding houses, together with 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

Dr Patricia Preedy Reporting inspector

Ms Sarah Williamson Compliance team inspector (Head of PSHE, HMC school)

Mr David Pafford Boarding team inspector (Retired deputy head, HMC and IAPS

association school)

Mr Grant Whitaker Team inspector (Former Director of Studies, IAPS Prep School)