



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Hereford Cathedral Junior School

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Hereford Cathedral Junior School			
DfE number	884/6009			
Registered charity number	518889			
Address	Hereford Cathedral Junior School 28 Castle Street Hereford Herefordshire HR1 2NW			
Telephone number	01432 363511			
Email address	enquiry@herefordcs.com			
Head	Mrs Helen Hoffmann			
Chair of governors	Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	205			
	EYFS	43	Pre-prep	29
	Juniors	133		
Inspection dates	7 to 10 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Hereford Cathedral Junior School is a co-educational day school located in close proximity to Hereford Cathedral. It was founded in 1898 and became part of Hereford Cathedral School in 1987. The nursery was opened in 1990. The school has its own headteacher and the headmaster of the senior school has overall responsibility. Both senior and junior schools are administered by a charitable trust and are overseen by the same governing body.
- 1.2 The school comprises three sections: Nursery, for children aged 3 to 4 years, Pre-Prep for pupils aged 4 to 7 years, and Junior, for pupils aged 7 to 11 years.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school appointed a new headteacher to the junior school in April 2022 and a new headmaster across Hereford Cathedral School in September 2021.
- 1.4 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.5 The school aims to provide boys and girls with an excellent standard of teaching and individual care. It seeks to offer them a broad range of opportunities to develop every aspect of their potential within a culture that produces well-balanced, confident and considerate young adults ready for the wider world.

About the pupils

- 1.6 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds located in Herefordshire or nearby counties. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 31 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include difficulties in speech and language, literacy, numeracy, processing and motor skills, all of whom receive additional specialist help. There are 21 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data is used by the school to identify the most able pupils in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for other pupils because of their special talents in music, drama and sport.

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. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. 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. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. 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: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the 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 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.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. 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.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is 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 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 are met.**

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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 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

- 2.12 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.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 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.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 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 well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is 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 good.

- Pupils of all ages are strong communicators who delight in sharing the successes of their school.
- Pupils achieve high levels of success in extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sport.
- Pupils' depth of learning is not firmly embedded due to the lack of cross-curricular links across all subjects.
- Pupils make good progress overall. Some year groups make much more progress than others.
- The most able pupils do not always reach their potential because insufficient challenge is given to them.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.

- Pupils of all ages feel happy and cared for within the distinctive school community.
- Pupils of all ages undertake leadership roles conscientiously and contribute positively to the school community.
- Pupils have a strong moral code and they understand the need for rules in a number of contexts.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and stay safe.

Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements.

- Strengthen pupils' depth of learning.
- Enable all pupils to make rapid progress so that they reach their potential.
- Further develop pupils' awareness of cultural diversity by re-establishing and actively creating more opportunities to interact with other backgrounds and faiths.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Pupils of all ages make good progress overall over time, but some year groups make significantly more progress than others. The best progress made is due to the expert approach of staff and the attention paid to assessment data that help teachers to plan appropriately for their needs. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses, but on occasion the individual needs of

lower and higher ability pupils are not fully taken into account when planning and therefore progress for them is limited. The choristers make good progress in relation to their starting points due to the close tracking by leaders which ensures their workload does not impact negatively on their academic work. Teaching in the EYFS ensures that individual needs are catered for and enables all children to make appropriate progress. Almost all children achieve a good level of education by the time they finish Reception.

- 3.6 In the early years, children engage wholeheartedly in their learning and work happily together as highly professional staff include children's personal interests when planning the curriculum. Most pupils develop secure knowledge and make good progress overall in all areas of learning and acquire skills, thus meeting the school's aim. They achieve well in creative subjects due to teaching that they find inspirational from enthusiastic staff. In discussion, pupils explained that the lessons they find the most engaging and in which they make the best progress are those with open-ended tasks that challenge them to think for themselves. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils are able to consolidate their learning in some subjects through strong thematic links. For example, older pupils commented on how their knowledge of the novel *War Horse* supported their understanding of the origins of the First World War. Such cross-curricular links, however, are not well-embedded and opportunities to extend learning are under-developed. As a result, pupils' learning does not always have the same amount of depth. As such, the school has made limited progress in meeting the recommendation in the previous inspection. Pupils acquire enhanced knowledge and skills through a varied range of extra-curricular activities and an extensive programme of trips and visits offered to them.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages demonstrate strong communication skills which they effectively apply to all areas of learning. Children in the EYFS listen attentively to the teacher, answer questions confidently and use their knowledge of letters and sounds accurately to build simple words. Pupils explained how specialist speech and drama teaching enables them to develop useful presentation skills that they use in lessons, assemblies and poetry recitals. They contribute orally with insight, maturity and humour. Where lessons were overly teacher-led, pupils were not encouraged to share their ideas before committing them to paper and learning lacked depth. Pupils talked passionately about their love of books and spoke appreciatively of special events such as World Book Day and visiting author workshops. Older pupils were enthused by their visit to the senior school library. Pupils are adept at writing in a variety of genres and for different audiences, such as diary entries, newspaper reports and children's books. They are able to inject personality and humour into their writing. Older pupils successfully present persuasive arguments in writing, as seen in letters pleading for mercy on behalf of the captured highwayman. However, when teachers placed an over-emphasis on neat presentation and grammatical rules in some subjects, outcomes were limited and creativity stifled.
- 3.8 Children in EYFS quickly develop strong numerical skills through a range of well-planned, play-based activities that focus on individual needs. Younger pupils work confidently with numbers to 100 and solve simple money calculations. The oldest pupils can calculate square roots, multiply decimals and apply the concept of negative numbers to demonstrate ratio. Pupils of all abilities talk positively about mathematics and feel they make rapid progress due to engaging teaching and interesting, challenging work. They proudly talk of their participation in the national Primary Maths Challenge. Pupils successfully apply mathematical skills to other areas of the curriculum. For example, in physical education (PE) pupils worked diligently using stopwatches and tape measures to record times and distances of their athletics activities. Older pupils worked enthusiastically solving problems linked to perimeters of rectilinear shapes using technology to extend their learning.
- 3.9 Older pupils demonstrate sound skills in information and communication technology (ICT) in some areas of the curriculum, but do not use it regularly as a resource for learning. Their ability to search online for information during lessons and to select technology to support learning is restricted due to the lack of availability of the hardware in classrooms and its inclusion in all schemes of work. Where

cross-curricular links to support learning are explicit, pupils make significant progress. For example, older pupils were seen effectively manipulating interactive whiteboards in mathematics, which enabled rapid progress in their proficiency to calculate perimeter. They use software to create presentations on topics such as how to make electricity and can create web designs using HTML code. Younger pupils were seen using software to create tables. However, few examples of younger pupils using technology other than in discrete ICT lessons were observed, and the more able pupils were not appropriately challenged. Pupils help teachers in a number of ways in their role as 'digital champions', for example, by projecting words in hymn practices using a computer. Their competence is further developed through extra-curricular clubs. Parents commented favourably in the pre-inspection questionnaire on their child's engagement with remote learning during the pandemic.

- 3.10 Most pupils develop strong study skills from the earliest age. Children in EYFS apply problem-solving and thinking skills to real life situations, as seen when they created a verbal list of what was needed to ensure everyone who lived in a castle was safe. When occasions arise to analyse and reflect on their work, pupils engage enthusiastically. This was seen during a problem-solving lesson on ratio. In some subjects and across year groups, the lack of opportunity to collaborate with peers and an over-dominance of written tasks means that the development of study skills for younger pupils is less well developed. In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that feedback and marking did not help them improve and therefore help build strong study skills. This was corroborated by the inspectors who noted a lack of consistency in marking across all classes. Older pupils were able to hypothesise, draw inference and consider their emotional response when they studied the relationship between the main characters in *Macbeth*. They looked at the evidence in order to grapple with challenging questions such as 'why', 'what if' and 'how does it make you feel'. Through effective use of strategies such as 'chalk talk', pupils could elicit the views of their peers in order to create hypotheses and confidently express both sides of the story.
- 3.11 All pupils are successful in their transfer examinations to the senior school, with a small number being awarded scholarships in music, sport and academics. Encouraged by enthusiastic, energetic staff, pupils achieve a high level of participation in cultural events including the Cheltenham Performing Arts Festival. Many pupils achieve merits or distinctions in external music, speech and drama examinations. They grow in confidence through regular participation in school productions and concerts. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the wide range of sporting activities provided and show great pride when representing the school in competitive team games as well as individual sports. They delight in representing their school in national competitions such as the Primary Maths Challenge and are enormously proud of their attainment of bronze, silver and gold medals. Senior management ensure that pupils' successes outside the classroom, for example in equestrianism, are warmly celebrated by the school community.
- 3.12 Overall, pupils of all ages and abilities have positive attitudes to learning. Children in the EYFS select tasks from the range available to them with enthusiasm, knowing that it is important to stick with an activity once it has been chosen. Pupils work well individually, in pairs and small groups, and thrive on the opportunities provided for collaboration with their peers. For example, mature attitudes were seen when pupils discussed the possible meanings behind a passage of text in English. Younger pupils were so engaged in a mathematics lesson they pleaded with their teacher to carry on into breaktime. Pupils demonstrate less positive attitudes to learning when teachers rely heavily on work sheets, mismatch tasks to pupils' abilities and have lower expectations. In these lessons, pupils are less engaged with learning because they are often not encouraged to interact and expand on their views. All pupils are enthusiastic in their approach to creative subjects such as music, drama and art. They sing powerfully and passionately in choir and assembly, as if excellent singing is intrinsic through being at a cathedral school. Pupils showed equal commitment and passion when talking about their participation in sport and other extra-curricular activities.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages have particularly high levels of self-knowledge and self-discipline. As they progress through the school, they grow in self-esteem as they become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Within a culture of regular praise and reward they demonstrate positive learning habits. These are reinforced by the many motivational displays around the school such 'Wow' walls, 'Merit Moments' boards and the 'Marvellous Me' display in Nursery. Older pupils showed resilience in mathematics when they had to revisit mistakes more than once to end up with the right answer. Where tasks were seen to have an inappropriate level of challenge, pupils were less resilient and quickly sought the teacher's help. Less able pupils appreciate the individual support from classroom assistants when it is given, and sensitive, focused teaching ensures that all pupils know what they are good at and where they need to improve. The oldest pupils perform confidently to an audience and proudly represent the school in a variety of activities. Use of shared facilities and joint events means that pupils are familiar with the senior school. Senior leaders ensure that pupils feel very well-prepared academically and personally for the transition to the next stage in their school career.
- 3.15 Pupils make sensible choices and have a clear understanding that the decisions they make will impact directly on their own performance and welfare. Regular reinforcement and praise when good choices are made instils a confident, positive attitude to work and raises the pupils' self-esteem. Older pupils commented that it was important to consider time for homework when making choices about school clubs and other commitments. Open-ended questioning by skilled staff in the EYFS carefully guides and encourages children to think about the choices they make. For example, staff encouraged children to experiment with the best way to arrange giant bricks in the construction area so that the police station they were building would be really strong. Older pupils explained that making the wrong decision can be the first step in learning. They think seriously about decision-making in the world and understand the impact of their actions on others, as seen in a discussion about liberty. Through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum, pupils think about the impact of their actions on others. Pupils said that the '5Bs' strategy to help them think for themselves by engaging their 'brain, board, book and buddy' before asking the teacher for help, the 'boss', supported their decision-making development. However, this strategy is not consistently applied in all subjects or age groups.
- 3.16 Pupils of all ages develop a strong awareness of spirituality. The youngest children greatly appreciate the beauty of the outdoor environment during their regular yoga sessions on Castle Green. Reception children were enthralled as they discovered insects on the water when pond-dipping and when they dug holes in the headmaster's garden to encourage butterflies to visit. Younger pupils exhibited much awe and wonder as they saw lambs being born in the springtime. They spoke with delight as they explained how the same seagull comes back to nest on a chimney pot each year to rear her chicks. Choristers say they often experience a 'tingle factor' when singing in the magnificent cathedral. The broad curriculum enables pupils to develop a deep appreciation of the non-material aspects of life through music, literature and art. Work on the novel *War Horse* enabled the oldest pupils to demonstrate empathy with the plight of ordinary people living during the First World War. Where pupils were not encouraged to question and discuss their views openly, their engagement in philosophical debate was less meaningful.
- 3.17 Pupils of all ages have a well-developed moral code which enables them to distinguish right from wrong. Children in EYFS understand clear codes of behaviour which help them to work happily together. They take turns to speak and freely share resources and offer help to each other. Gentle guidance is calmly delivered by patient, kind-hearted staff so that the need for making good choices is embedded at an early age. Pupils are fully aware of their personal responsibility for good behaviour and the need to show respect towards others. Pupils talk fondly of the excellent role models provided

by the caring staff. On the few occasions where lessons were seen to be too slow and lacking in appropriate challenge, pupils remained aware of behaviour expectations and displayed excellent self-control. Older pupils engaged thoughtfully on ethical issues and matters of conscience. This was seen when discussing whether German soldiers were good or bad arising from their study of *War Horse*. A themed programme of assemblies and special events such as anti-bullying week ensure that positive behaviour is regularly reinforced and celebrated.

- 3.18 Pupils collaborate well and support each other in communal tasks, happily working towards common outcomes. Senior leaders ensure pupils have good opportunities for social development, and ensure pastoral care is at the heart of provision. Those elected to the school council work effectively together to achieve common goals, such as raising money for Ukraine through an ice pop sale and leading the development of the old pond area to improve the school environment. As such, pupils feel immensely positive about the school community. The sense of belonging is palpable in the performing arts, seen when Year 6 pupils supported each other during the rehearsal for their production of *Treasure Island*. The choir clearly enjoyed working collaboratively to give an excellent performance during the choir rehearsal for an upcoming concert as they sang confidently in three parts. The choristers talk warmly about their sense of belonging to a highly disciplined but caring family. This is also clearly demonstrated through the house system. It enables pupils to successfully work across year groups towards common goals in house matches such as tug of war, cross country and major sports.
- 3.19 Pupils develop strong leadership skills and contribute positively to the school community through performing a wide range of duties. The sense of belonging is evident. Children in the EYFS thrive on class responsibilities, for example as line leaders and being a 'buddy' to children visiting for a taster day. Younger pupils said that reading their own *Mr Men* stories to Reception children made them feel grown up and proud. The oldest pupils conscientiously perform the varied leadership duties they are given, such as house captains and prefects. Pupils speak warmly of the close ties with Hereford Cathedral. The role within the local community undertaken by the choristers is greatly admired and a source of great pride. Pupils enthusiastically participate in local music, speech and drama festivals. They grow in self-esteem through good opportunities to actively contribute to the lives of others: they participate fully in charity events, such as 'Wear your Wellies Day' and the annual shoe box appeal.
- 3.20 Pupils show great respect for those of different faiths, backgrounds and traditions. Within a school culture of respect and tolerance, pupils are very accepting of each other and genuinely see no difference between themselves and the small number of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds at the school. Children in EYFS develop a strong understanding of other cultures through purposeful play-based activities using multi-cultural resources and sharing stories such as *Handa's Surprise*. Pupils develop a firm understanding of other cultures through celebration of special events such as Chinese New Year. They listen attentively in assemblies, in PSHE and religious education while those of other faiths and backgrounds share their experiences at home, such as preparing for Diwali. Before the period of lockdown pupils learned to appreciate and reflect on the diversity in their community and across the world through visits to places of worship including a mosque, a Sikh temple and Greek Orthodox church. In the questionnaire, all parents and staff felt that the school was successful in promoting respect and tolerance.
- 3.21 Pupils of all ages are aware of how to stay safe, fit and keep healthy. Children in EYFS consistently follow simple rules embedded in their daily routines which enable them to stay safe, such as not running in the classroom and washing hands after flushing the toilet. Pupils know what constitutes a healthy diet and make informed food choices at lunchtimes. They can explain the need for drinking plenty of water and understand that fizzy drinks do not hydrate. Older pupils recount the many ways in which they are able to keep physically fit. They appreciate the range of extra-curricular clubs that provide good levels of challenge in a variety of sports. Pupils are mindful of the particular dangers arising from the many staircases and solid doors in the buildings and take care when moving around the school. Pupils, including the choristers, know there is always someone they can talk to if they are

worried about something. They show a good level awareness of the dangers that can arise from technology online such as cyberbullying, a theme that is regularly reinforced in ICT, PSHE lessons and assemblies.

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, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, 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 Wendy Bowring	Reporting inspector
Mrs Annette Nightingale	Compliance team inspector (Senior teacher, IAPS school)
Mrs Sarah Morris	Team inspector (Headteacher, ISA and IAPS school)