



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

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

**Highfield School**

**November 2022**

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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	Highfield School			
<b>DfE number</b>	938/6252			
<b>Address</b>	Highfield School Highfield Lane Liphook Hampshire GU30 7LQ			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01428 728000			
<b>Email address</b>	highfieldhead@highfieldandbrookham.co.uk			
<b>Head</b>	Mrs Suzannah Cryer			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr William Mills			
<b>Age range</b>	8 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	264			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	172	<b>Boarders</b>	92
	<b>Juniors</b>	144	<b>Seniors</b>	120
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8 to 10 November 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Highfield School is a co-educational independent day and boarding school. Situated near Liphook in Hampshire, the school was originally founded in 1892 as a boys' boarding school and has occupied its present site since 1907.
- 1.2 The school and Brookham, its separate pre-preparatory school, are owned by the same company, whose chairman is the owner and proprietor. Directors of the company support the school's governance.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has restructured the senior management team, expanded provision for pupils with special educational needs, and further developed systems for tracking pupils' progress. The school has also embarked on an environmental programme to become carbon positive by 2030. The head took up her post in September 2022.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school seeks to provide a first-rate day and boarding education, supported by a strong Christian ethos, in a community where every child is treated equally, respected, happy, fulfilled and secure. It aims to achieve this by encouraging all children to become independent learners who are well prepared for the challenges and demands of their lives in the wider world.

### About the pupils

- 1.5 Most day pupils are drawn from professional and business families living within a 20-mile radius of the school. Boarders are drawn from the local area, the wider UK and from a number of overseas countries. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is broadly average compared with those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 52 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional support. Two pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). English is an additional language (EAL) for 27 pupils whose needs are met in the classroom or through additional support. Data used by the school have identified 67 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

## 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 **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](#), [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 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. 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. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 and NMS 7, 8, 9, 10, 15 and 16 are met.**

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

- 2.11 The school makes the 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 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 school**

- 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 well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 The standards relating to leadership and management of the school in 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 have excellent communication skills; they develop expressive articulacy in both the spoken and written word.
- They achieve success in a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural activities.
- Regular and efficient use of ICT is made by pupils to support their learning in a wide variety of curriculum areas.
- Pupils are keen mathematicians. They skilfully apply their mathematical knowledge and produce work of a high standard.

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

- Pupils are keen and confident decision makers and ably put this skill to good use in their learning.
- Pupils' appreciation of the non-material aspects of life is extremely well developed by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils form excellent relationships with each other. They have strong collaborative skills and relish working together to achieve common goals.
- They exhibit extremely strong senses of inclusivity and acceptance of diversity.

#### Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable pupils to develop further their own enquiry and higher-level thinking skills through the provision of extra opportunities for independent learning.

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

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

3.5 Data provided by the school indicate that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, overall, is at least in line with, and in many cases, above age-related expectations. Analysis of tracking data shows that pupils make good progress over time in both English and mathematics. Scrutiny of work confirms this finding. Leaders have been assiduous in ensuring that progress in mathematics has been particularly rapid since the school reopened following pandemic closures. Pupils with SEND attain well and make good progress over their time at the school. Those with EAL make very strong progress from



their starting points. There is no significant difference in attainment in English and mathematics between male and female pupils overall. Nearly all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the range of subjects was suitable for their child and that teaching enables their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils develop excellent communication skills as they progress through the school. This is confirmed through scrutiny of their work, which reveals strong writing skills using increasingly sophisticated language across a variety of genres. Examples of Year 8 creative writing shows significant progression and development, such as that seen in English composition and in the description of enzyme action on substrates, in science. Year 6 pupils were able to identify characteristics of an effective narrative such as plot, structure, feelings and figurative language, including personification, onomatopoeia and metaphor. Pupils with SEND or EAL were seen to make swift progress in communication skills as teaching and tasks are tailored appropriately to meet their needs. Older pupils read poetry with excellent expression and voice modulation during chapel service and, in discussions, allowed each other the room to explain their ideas, listening intently while others were speaking. In a Year 7 Latin lesson, the pupils were able solve derivations with purpose and gusto. During a Year 4 Spanish lesson, pupils put their excellent active listening skills to effective use as they voiced their opinions and listened to each other's contributions.
- 3.7 Pupils achieve success in a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural activities. They are successful at gaining places to a wide selection of schools with competitive entries upon leaving; many receive multiple offers, academic and other scholarship awards. Pupils participate with great success in local, regional and national, sports, literary, swimming, mathematics, science and artistic competitions. Many pupils play a musical instrument and opt to take LAMDA and ABRSM examinations in speech and drama and music, with many gaining merit and distinction grades. The school's governance and leadership has ensured that pupils have many opportunities both to expand and to excel in their personal interests, successfully meeting the stated aim that pupils are encouraged to become independent learners who are well prepared for the challenges and demands of their lives in the wider world.
- 3.8 Pupils make excellent use of ICT to support their learning. For example, older pupils used tablet computers to research the work of different font developers, before using their fonts as inspiration to design logos for their mini-pillow projects. During a Year 8 music lesson all pupils confidently created a 12-bar blues riff and added a bass line using a digital music editor. In a design technology lesson, younger pupils confidently used software to create acrylic clockfaces. In discussions, pupils explained how they used word processors to write personified letters home during an WW2 evacuee-themed day. In discussions, pupils demonstrated very efficient use of a digital note-taking application as a cypher for their thoughts, having created an informative collage of notes, pictures, doodles and articles for a history topic. The school has successfully developed pupils' ability to use this technology through effective teaching, as well as ensuring access to high quality hardware and a bespoke digital resource library.
- 3.9 Pupils are keen mathematicians; they skilfully apply their mathematical knowledge to a high standard, as confirmed by scrutiny of work. Observations of lessons revealed teaching which encourages positive effort and the belief that mistakes are opportunities for learning. Pupils are consequently adept at using self-assessment to identify their mistakes and learn from them. Tasks were seen to be suitably tailored and appropriately challenging for all abilities. In a Year 4 lesson, most pupils were able to work independently to tackle two-step problems using two- and three-digit numbers involving two operations. The more able tackled increasingly challenging questions with three digits and complex wording. In a Year 8 lesson, all pupils independently and confidently multiplied brackets and simplified algebraic equations, explaining their calculations confidently. In discussions, pupils praised the influence of their teachers in raising their confidence and abilities in mathematics. Skilled support from support staff in lessons observed made maths accessible and interesting for those who struggle with their reading – which in turn allowed them to contribute and progress in class. Pupils also

explained how they used mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in other areas, such as in design technology (DT) for measuring accurately, in science for calculating equations or in computing for coding coordinates using software packages.

- 3.10 Pupils have a very clear understanding of the interconnection of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. For example, they explained that knowledge of Latin verbs and vocabulary helps them to make educated guesses when faced with previously unknown Spanish words, as they have the same root. Year 5 pupils demonstrated an incisive understanding of the concept of food miles, explaining the effects that transporting food for great distances have on the environment and climate. During a swimming lesson, older pupils demonstrated efficient mastery of the breaststroke, whilst in the art studio, pupils were inspired by the teaching to transfer well-designed images onto individual canvases successfully. They problem-solved effectively to assure a high-quality finished article. Year 7 pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of the causes and impact of the Cockermouth floods. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons and that their teachers know their subjects well. The leadership team have ensured that effective cross-curricular planning promotes pupils' excellent outcomes in this area.
- 3.11 Pupils' study skills are well developed by the time they leave the school. This was seen, for example in Y8 history work on the Battle of Hastings, where careful analysis of sources led to the formation of a hypothesis as to whether the outcome might have been different if the Normans believed that William had been killed. This led to synthesis of valid judgements and conclusions as to reasons for the success of the invading force. Pupils develop higher order inferencing skills as they tackle increasingly challenging reading comprehension exercises from texts such as Year 6 work on *The Lord of the Rings*. They are naturally curious and maximise every opportunity to develop further their excellent study skills afforded them through the well-planned curriculum. They cited independent prep work, in discussions, as being integral to their success. They are eager to contribute to discussions after reflecting thoughtfully on challenging questioning from teaching. For example, consideration of the example of Malala Yusufzai led to a thought-provoking discussion on faith and belief during a Year 8 TPR (theology, politics and religion) lesson. Year 7 pupils' history work on the impacts of the East India Trading Company evidenced proficient use of sources. Carefully planned teaching, access to relevant sources and the promotion of creative thinking skills leads to these excellent outcomes. Scrutiny of work reveals less evidence of pupils' independent enquiry-led research skills development, however, as a preponderance of this work is focused on specific projects set for entrance examinations to senior school.
- 3.12 Pupils have a very positive attitude to school, their peers and life. They are focused in lessons, ask insightful questions to satisfy their curiosity and are keen to take responsibility for their own learning. They are also kind-hearted, expressing the desire for everyone to succeed. In discussions, pupils explained that it was important to look on the bright side and not to be disheartened. Observations confirmed that pupils show great desire to achieve and to reach their full potential. Boarders, for example, explained how the daily prep session helped them to become more self-disciplined, as they learn not to be tempted by distractions while they complete their independent work. Pupils work very well, collaboratively, taking on supportive or leadership roles when working with others. Engagement in most lessons observed was high, with the result that pupils learned efficiently and quickly.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils' strong moral compasses are a significant strength of the school community. Throughout the visit, pupils were seen to display excellent unforced manners and behaviour both with each other and with adults. In discussions, they explained that everyone is different and may have various experiences, but stated with utmost clarity that that attributes of care, respect and kindness towards others were central to the values of the school. They were seen to live out these beliefs throughout

the inspection: pupils were quick to introduce themselves, shake hands with visitors and ask how they were; their manners were seen to be impeccable. Pupils accept responsibility for their behaviour, because they understand that making mistakes is an opportunity to learn. In questionnaires, a very small minority of pupils disagreed that pupils are kind and respect each other. Inspectors found no evidence to support this perception. In discussions both day pupils and boarders explained, with mature insight, the importance of seeking the kindness in oneself and in other people. These qualities are instilled by strong implementation of the school's code of conduct and consistently high expectations from all stakeholders.

- 3.15 Pupils' appreciation of the non-material aspects of life is extremely well developed by the time they leave the school. They described, during discussions, how important it is to have close family and friendship ties, as this ensures mutual support. They also explained that expressing love and helping others resulted in strong feelings of wellbeing. They understand that having time to engage in activities such as walking in the woods or listening to music is vital for personal wellbeing, yielding huge value at no material cost. Year 7 pupils spoke, in discussions, of the positive impact of practising breath control techniques, on their wellbeing. They explained how they use techniques such as these to calm themselves in preparation for challenging events. Pupils appreciate each other and evidenced, in discussions, that community spirit is potentially worth more than the sum of its parts. They also articulated a clear appreciation of the beauty to be found around the school grounds, in the woods, for instance. Others voiced their gratitude for the efforts which their parents were making in allowing them to attend the school. The school's *Keys* programme, including activities such as yoga and mindfulness is effective in helping pupils to be calm, grounded and appreciative of the opportunities from which they benefit.
- 3.16 Pupils develop and maintain extremely effective relationships with each other. A very large majority of pupils and nearly all parents agreed that the school helps them to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Pupils were seen, during observations of learning, to have strong collaborative skills and to relish the opportunities to work together to achieve common goals. Proactive seating plans and activities such as 'think, pair, share' planned by the teachers facilitate the pupils' excellent social development. Older pupils spoke about studying the book '*Holes*' in English, acting it out in small groups. The groups decided themselves the roles and interacted seamlessly with those who were working remotely. Discussions with boarders evidenced the firmly held understanding that it is important not to be rude because this would hamper future life chances. Pupils both understand and respond very positively to the high expectations and examples set by staff.
- 3.17 Pupils develop high-level decision-making skills by the time they leave the school. In discussions, they described their busy lives and how choosing, for example, to attend Friday catch-up sessions instead of playing outside was not a chore but, instead, an opportunity to remove the burden of a task so that they might better enjoy their free time later. Pupils develop highly organised habits and routines to ensure that they are not overwhelmed and can enjoy success in a wide variety of pursuits. Pupils are involved in key decision-making forums in the school such as School and Food Councils, where current agenda items include improving the content of their "sus" (snack). In discussions, inspectors remarked that this issue had been commented upon by many respondents. Pupils explained how raising their concerns as an agenda item had resulted in school leaders agreeing to work with pupils on an agreeable resolution, illustrating a key understanding of the power of reasoned negotiation. Pupils were seen to enjoy success in lessons where they are able to select the level of task difficulty. Positive feedback from teaching gives the pupils the confidence to succeed in decision-making without being hampered by self-doubt.
- 3.18 Pupils' self-understanding is developed to a very high level during their time at the school. In discussions, they explained that regular testing and questioning from teaching helped them to assess their own progress and gave them confidence that they were making progress in the right direction. Scrutiny of work reveals that pupils regularly assess and edit their own work effectively, because teaching promotes positivity and effective learning attributes, which in turn fosters pupils' self-

confidence. This was seen frequently in pupil interactions and the interest they showed in one another. In discussions pupils rationalised their belief that they had grown in confidence due to the broad curriculum in the school. Year 7 pupils demonstrated superb resilience in discussions, explaining the power found in "...not being able to do something - yet". Teaching fosters a "can do" attitude in learners through employing effective marking and feedback strategies which promote a dialogue and instil the goal of excellence; pupils are, therefore, highly resilient, self-aware and exude confidence.

- 3.19 The proprietor and leaders have been successful in achieving the school's aim of developing an equitable community where every child is respected, fulfilled and secure. Pupils exhibit extremely strong senses of inclusivity and acceptance of diversity. They explained, in discussions, that their school is a place where difference is both accepted and celebrated. They expressed a deep understanding that learning to get on with others who are different is vital for the mutual benefit of all. Pupils' respect for other people and different cultures is palpable. Recently joined boarders from overseas described how welcome they were made to feel when they arrived. Staff exemplify this culture through their teaching and lived experience. The curriculum promotes these qualities in many areas, including an up-to-date selection of texts promoting equality, diversity and cultural understanding in the school library. Themes in assemblies and the PSHE curriculum as well as effective TPR (theology, philosophy and religion) coverage of world faiths empowers and promotes pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding of others.
- 3.20 Pupils have a very strong understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Almost all parents agreed that the school safeguards their child effectively. Pupils stated, in discussions, that keeping them safe is the number one priority for their school. They were able to explain, in great detail, how to stay safe both online and also in everyday life, citing the example of the recent bonfire night, when they described how they kept safe in the dark and during fireworks outside. They also showed a clear understanding of the need for making appropriate choices to keep safe in subjects such as science, by making their own assessment of the risk and taking appropriate mitigating action, such as wearing eye protection when making sparklers. They understand what constitutes a healthy diet, describing healthy food choices and why it was important to exclude items such as nuts from the school to avoid harm to those with food allergies. They also explained their determination to lead a healthy physical life by taking regular exercise and participating in active sports. Pupils understand how to be mentally healthy through the coverage of the PSHE curriculum. In discussions, Yr 7 pupils explained the importance of talking to someone who makes them feel safe if they are anxious. Leaders have successfully inculcated an effective culture of health and safety in the school.

## 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 proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended chapel. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Kerry Lord	Reporting inspector
Dr Toby Griffiths	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Jane Crouch	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Simon Leyshon	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, HMC school)