



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

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

Ludgrove School

October 2022

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School's Details

School	Ludgrove School		
DfE number	872/6002		
Registered charity number	309100		
Address	Ludgrove School Ludgrove Wokingham Berkshire RG40 3AB		
Telephone number	0118 978 9881		
Email address	office@ludgroveschool.co.uk		
Headmaster	Mr Simon Barber		
Chair of governors	Mr Charles Butterworth		
Age range	8 to 13		
Number of pupils on roll	185		
	Boarders	185	
	Juniors	63	Seniors 122
Inspection dates	17 to 20 October 2022		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Ludgrove School is an independent boarding school for male pupils. It was founded in 1892 and is set in 130 acres of grounds in rural Berkshire. The school became a charitable trust in 1972 and is governed by a board of trustees. The current Chair of Governors was appointed in June 2021.
- 1.2 Boarding facilities are housed within the main school building, with all the dormitories situated on the first floor. The school consists of the juniors for pupils aged 8 and 9 years, and seniors for those aged 10 to 13. Since the previous inspection, the school has created the Exploration Centre for scientific and creative learning.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The principal aims of the school are for boys to grow and develop in a happy caring environment, to explore and expand their potential and to learn to develop an awareness and concern for others around them. The school aims to enable the boys to meet future challenges and opportunities with confidence, good manners, and humour.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, mostly from British families. Approximately twelve percent of pupils come from overseas. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 37 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and both receive additional support. Pupils who are more able and/or have talents in a wide range of areas are identified, and provision is made in the curriculum to meet the needs of those pupils.

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 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, 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 and 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 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 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
VIL, VIJ	Year 4
IVPH, IVM, IVWK	Year 5
IIIP, IIH, III	Year 6
II, Shell, Remove	Year 7
1, Ia, Ib, Ic	Year 8

Key findings

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

- Pupils of all abilities achieve very well in their entrance examinations to senior schools.
- Pupils throughout the school are excellent mathematicians; they calculate confidently and apply their knowledge effectively when solving problems in all subjects.
- Pupils are highly articulate, have strong communication skills and achieve excellent levels of attainment in all areas of literacy.
- Pupils have excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across all learning, and a deep thirst for knowledge.

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

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives, demonstrating self-confidence, self-awareness, and resilience.
- Pupils demonstrate an acute understanding of right and wrong and a mature appreciation of the importance of kindness.
- Pupils actively support each other in a collaborative atmosphere, respecting and recognising individual differences and needs.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be physically and mentally healthy.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Further develop the range of pupils' contributions to the local community.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils achieve well above the expected level for their age and ability by the time they leave the school. The achievement of all learners is supported by a wide and well-planned curriculum which includes areas of learning beyond mainstream subjects, such as philosophy; Latin; and ceramics. Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress and take great pride in seeing their grades improve over the year, informed by regular reporting for effort and attainment which is shared between pupil and tutor. Pupils attain excellent results in examinations to senior schools with rigorous entry requirements, with all successfully gaining places at their school of choice and some pupils being awarded scholarships or prizes. Pupils take examinations in their stride and do not feel overly pressured by them, because governors and senior leaders ensure that the focused, yet nurturing and supportive boarding ethos enables pupils to manage the demands of the curriculum. All parents who responded to the questionnaire stated that the boarding experience has helped their child's progress.
- 3.6 Pupils make excellent progress in knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum, benefiting from high-quality teaching and positive attitudes, in line with the school's aim to ensure pupils meet future challenges with confidence, good manners and humour. For example, in Year 6 art, pupils worked extremely successfully to apply their excellent knowledge of negative space and the grid method to skilfully transfer their initial designs onto a larger model. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons, with all agreeing that teachers know their subject well and know how to help them learn. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils display a sustained craving for knowledge, they seek clarification where required, assimilate new information easily, and identify links and connections which demonstrate secure understanding and insights. In a Greek lesson in Year 8, for example, pupils demonstrated a strong understanding of grammar to successfully manipulate between dative, accusative, singular and plural.
- 3.7 Pupils across the school demonstrate outstanding communication skills and successfully apply these to all areas of learning. Lively debates and topical conversation in history, geography and theology, philosophy, and religion (TPR) enable pupils to gather their thoughts and present them in a coherent, persuasive manner. Pupils are supremely confident and articulate when conversing with adults as they go about their daily life in the boarding house and at mealtimes. Pupils of all ages and abilities read enthusiastically and appreciate a wide range of genres, happily losing themselves in a fictional world during the much-loved daily session devoted to reading. Pupils communicate well in writing and a wealth of written work reflects use of mature vocabulary, profiting from strategies to extend vocabulary such as the *millionaire reading challenge*. Writing letters home means that boarders have to engage with the written word meaningfully from an early age and become skilled in doing so. Pupils creative writing becomes more sophisticated as they move through the school, as they use an increasing array of literary techniques. This was seen in poignant stories in Year 8, where imagery and personification predominate; pupils stated that "the evening breeze picked up to a passionate wind" and that "thick fog had descended into the night sky and tendrils of the mist were reaching like fingers into the shed". Less able pupils, including those with SEND or EAL are extremely well supported in lessons or in small groups and the use of ICT enables them to participate fully.
- 3.8 Pupils' mathematical skills develop rapidly and quickly become excellent for their ages, with no significant difference between those with SEND or EAL. They apply their knowledge and skills to solve complex problems in other areas of learning. For example, in Year 5 carpentry, pupils effortlessly calculated how much they needed to trim wood, and in a Year 6 computing lesson pupils confidently used their knowledge of bearings and how to calculate speed, to programme a robot to complete complex routes. Pupils are competent in a wide range of mathematical concepts including algebra, and trigonometry, and pupils of all abilities are proficient in applying mathematical knowledge. For example, in Year 4 mathematics, pupils enthusiastically explained and developed the reasoning behind their answers regarding mean, median and mode, demonstrating a detailed grasp of methodology.

Year 7 articulated their thoughts clearly when explaining how they deduced the value of a given angle from a complex polygon arrangement and benefited from an atmosphere of mutual respect.

- 3.9 Pupils throughout the school and in many different subjects make confident and most effective use of information and communication technology (ICT), as a result of investment in resources initiated by the senior leadership team and supported by the governing body. Pupils have the required level of skill to be competent users, as a result of a well-planned curriculum with a clear understanding that technology needs to enhance learning not dictate it. This was seen by pupils in a Year 8 mathematics lesson who confidently used excel spreadsheets to look at the connection between radius, diameter and circumference, inputting data which they manipulated to produce a value for pi. In lessons observed and pupils work seen there were excellent examples of ICT being used proficiently, such as pictures and graphs embedded into work in English and science, research being undertaken in geography or using devices to take notes and complete exercises in subjects such as Latin.
- 3.10 Pupils of all ages and abilities develop strong study skills. They benefit greatly from advice given by skilled subject teachers on examination technique and revision guidance in a programme of study skills workshops. Pupils develop the ability to work independently and have a mature approach to academic studies in response to an hour of private study each day. Boarding enables pupils to benefit considerably from more informal opportunities to access support in their academic work, and some comment on being 'pulled along' in their learning by friends, whose positive work ethic provides them with good role models. Pupils enjoy and respond well to the strong emphasis on independent investigation, research, and discovery, as seen in science and history across all age groups. Year 8 pupils hypothesised knowledgeably, about what they might see as they prepared a slide of onion epidermal cells to look at under a microscope, guided by excellent teaching input. Pupils' analytical skills are also excellent, as demonstrated by Year 4 pupils' dissection of an online clip from *Prince Pondicherry Palace* from *Charlie and Chocolate Factory* and the oldest pupils' superb analysis of information presented through a picture compared to text. All parents who responded to the questionnaire stated that the school equips their child with team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve considerable success beyond the classroom, benefiting greatly from using the outstanding facilities, ensuring that the leaderships desire for every pupil to develop holistically can be realised. A significant number of pupils learn a musical instrument. Results in music examinations are consistently high, with many pupils achieving the highest grades. Pupils' excellent artwork can be seen around the school. Particular individuality and creativity was evidenced in the mixed media hanging display of sunflowers, which were completed by the Year 7 pupils. Dedicated staff contribute significantly to the pupils outstanding performance in sport. Teams consistently reach national cricket and football finals. Pupils also excel in swimming, rugby, skiing and chess. Drama is of an extremely high standard; pupils perform in productions each year and boys spoke excitedly about recent roles in the *Jungle Book* and *Treasure Island* but also achieving success in external drama examinations. Pupils achieve significant success in external mathematics and writing competitions.
- 3.12 Wonderfully spirited pupils' display outstanding attitudes to learning, whether they are working individually, in pairs, or in groups. Throughout the school, pupils are both curious and ambitious, taking considerable leadership in their learning. Pupils approach their lessons with great enthusiasm and a willingness to work, and in the questionnaire all pupils responded that the school expects them to behave well. In most of the lessons observed, pupils settled into their work purposefully and calmly, as a result of the positive relationships between the pupils themselves and with the teacher. Their considerable success is a result of the evident ethos of working hard, following clear instructions and having their progress closely monitored by teachers. In a Year 7 science lesson, groups of pupils worked diligently on an experiment and applied themselves wholeheartedly to the activity. Pupils report that they are able to develop initiative and independence through being part of the amazing boarding community; a safe and nurturing environment where character, confidence and creativity can take root and blossom.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are naturally and unaffectedly self-confident. Proud of their school, they are at ease with staff, other adults and with one another. Pupils develop strongly as individuals, enabled by an open culture and the high level of pastoral care they receive; pupils are reassured by the opportunity presented by the 'green post-box' for them to express concerns in writing. Pupils' self-confidence and resilience is developed by many features of school life, such as deserved rewards for good work and good behaviour, and the opportunity to perform on the public stage. Moreover, they are able to reflect on the person they have become and their self-worth. They know how to improve, always driven by the school mantra of being the best they can be. The considerable independence afforded to pupils through boarding, contributes to the rapid development of self-understanding, enabling them to be extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 3.15 Pupils understand that the decisions they make have an impact on their own well-being and on that of others, and they are diligent in seeking ways in which to minimise upsetting others, whilst taking heed of the school's advice to be honest, open and kind. Pupils quickly learn to make sensible choices, such as which activities to join, following their interests to broaden their learning; how best to plan for private study, to achieve their potential academically; or what tasty food to select at lunchtime, to ensure they are well fuelled for the afternoon's activities. Choice is a common feature of lessons, with pupils given opportunities to select appropriate activities with suitable levels of challenge. Pupils make thoughtful decisions about how best to use their free time, balancing enjoyment of activities, including joining in the latest crazes (currently playing with a diablo) with the need to study. Pupils treat the extensive school grounds with respect, and make sensible, mature decisions with regard to any potential risks when playing in them.
- 3.16 As they move through the school, pupils develop an increasingly deep spiritual understanding and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. For example, they appreciate the value of enriching and uplifting experiences, such as plays and concerts, which they have attended or in which they have performed. Pupils, from the oldest to the youngest, are moved by the beauty of the school's rural surroundings and appreciate greatly the freedom to explore their grounds and the opportunity this allows them to reflect. Irrespective of their own religious beliefs, all pupils demonstrate reverence in chapel services. Pupils respectfully listen to others during discussions, such as in a Year 7 religious studies lesson regarding arguments for and against capital punishment, with a pupil exclaiming that he was struggling to think of a positive as two wrongs never make a right.
- 3.17 Pupils' moral attitudes are well developed. Older pupils understand that they do make mistakes with their behaviour, but they appreciate the caring support that they receive when this does occur, believing that doing a reflective piece of writing is the most helpful way to ensure they learn from their mistakes. All pupils support each other if any unkindness or intolerance is evident which is supported by effective pastoral staff and robust procedures. Older pupils show care and concern for younger pupils and take responsibility for them when the opportunity allows, with inspectors witnessing many examples of kindness shown. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes and expects good behaviour.
- 3.18 The pupils' social awareness is excellent and their co-operative and supportive responses towards peers and younger children are instinctive, which helps to create a harmonious and engaging community. In the questionnaires all parents stated that the school was well governed and led. The school is seen by pupils as a large extended family where everyone is respected, and treated as unique individuals, with the all-embracing boarding ethos contributing enormously to the pupils outstanding social development. Pupils were seen collaborating effectively, engaging in discussion, and enjoying successfully completed shared tasks, such as a Year 6 class developing an improvisation performance in drama. Pupils build strong relationships and feel respected by teachers, who clearly want them to do well in all aspects of school life. These factors help pupils to develop into highly considerate and

empathetic young men who demonstrate a strong sense of loyalty to their school and who work together to fulfil common goals.

- 3.19 Pupils thrive through the many opportunities they are given to take on leadership roles within the school, such as monitors, house captains and guides for new pupils. All pupils have a strong sense of belonging and the oldest nurture and care for those younger than themselves. The exceptional activities programme further enables pupils to forge friendships with pupils of all ages. The pupil council enthusiastically discuss aspects of school and suggest initiatives to, in their words, 'make the school an even better place'. Successful changes include black out blinds for the dormitories, a wider selection of fruit at break and an extension to the adventure playground. Pupils demonstrate an awareness of the need to contribute to the lives of others, however, their engagement with the community locally is currently not well developed. Leadership and management have already identified this, together with a need to encourage environmentally responsible behaviour, as an area for development and have set up a group of governors to work with the school to prepare a plan.
- 3.20 Pupils flourish in a multi-cultural, diverse community in a relaxed and accepting way in response to the ethos of kindness and mutual respect which permeates the school. Pupils from different cultures blend in as one and celebrate the very British experience that parents appreciate. There is a sense of family and community for all, which boarding plays an essential part in developing. Pupils have a thoughtful awareness of British society and in particular the role of tolerance. Pupils confirmed in discussion that they aim to be the best version of themselves, recognising that others may have different views from themselves, but everyone is equally valued, irrespective of ability, opinion or belief. Pupils value the opportunity to learn about other religions and cultures, and their knowledge and understanding of these is well developed, with many opportunities for them to do so woven through the core curriculum, including a wide range of external speakers.
- 3.21 Pupils are not just physically healthy; they radiate cheerfulness and care for each other, in large part because of the priority attached by the leadership and management of the school to the fostering of their emotional well-being. Pupils feel safe within the school, with all pupils who responded to the questionnaire stating that this was the case. Furthermore, they fully understand the importance of staying safe and healthy in different activities, such as when surfing the internet or enjoying the weekend activities organised by the resident staff. Evidence from pupil discussions, boarding house visits, dining with the pupils and observation of games confirms the fact that pupils lead healthy active lives filled with a variety of sporting and activity opportunities which they grasp eagerly. This is supported by nutritious, delicious food delivered by the school kitchen at every mealtime. Pupils develop active, healthy bodies and minds in response to the governors' commitment to provide outstanding sports facilities, and the daily games and extensive activities programme enjoyed by all.

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 form meetings and 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

Mrs Ruth Loveman	Reporting inspector
Mr Kit Perona-Wright	Compliance team inspector (Assistant head, IAPS school)
Dr Simon Horbury	Team inspector (Teacher, IAPS school)
Mr Garry Binks	Team inspector for boarding (Former boarding housemaster, HMC school)