



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**Pipers Corner School**

**March 2023**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Pipers Corner School			
<b>DfE number</b>	825/6017			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	310635			
<b>Address</b>	Pipers Corner School Pipers Lane Great Kingshill High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP15 6LP			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 718255			
<b>Email address</b>	theschool@piperscorner.co.uk			
<b>Headmistress</b>	Mrs Helen Ness-Gifford			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Ms Helen Morton			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Pipers Corner School			
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	611			
	<b>EYFS</b>	9	<b>Pre-prep and Prep</b>	112
	<b>Seniors</b>	408	<b>Sixth Form</b>	82
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14 to 16 March 2023			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Pipers Corner School is an independent day school for female pupils. Established in London in 1930, the school is now set close to High Wycombe. It is overseen by a board of governors, as a charitable trust and company, limited by guarantee. The school is divided into three sections. The pre-prep, which is housed in a separate building on the school campus, and prep school and senior school.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.2 The school aims to know each student as an individual and identify, develop and support their talents and strengths. It strives to provide an environment where personal development is as important as academic success. The school endeavours to create a community based on Christian values, tolerance and service whilst encouraging sensitivity to the beliefs and convictions of others. It aims to ensure that students benefit from their learning environment and that valuable partnerships with families, local and wider communities are created.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.3 Pupils come mainly from professional and business families in the local area. Standardised test data indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average when compared with those taking the same tests nationally. Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 72 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive classroom support or additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for three pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers.

## 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 (EYFS) statutory framework. 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.

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 In the prep school, 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 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2017 to 2019 and 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the prep 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.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 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.
- 2.12 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**

2.13 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.

**2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] 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.

**2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is 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.

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

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

**2.20 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 excellent.

- Pupils are eloquent communicators and attentive, respectful listeners. They are confident and articulate speakers, skilful at expressing their views and opinions.
- Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning; they are naturally inquisitive and curious with a strong desire to learn.
- Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Pupils have strong study skills, demonstrating excellent abilities to hypothesise, synthesise and analyse.
- Pupils' aesthetic and creative skills are excellent.

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

- Pupils of all ages demonstrate high levels of self-confidence, self-discipline, and resilience.
- Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and keep healthy.
- Pupils make outstanding contributions to their own community.
- Pupils have a high level of moral understanding, demonstrating a keen sense of right and wrong.

#### Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Enable pupils to gain a greater understanding of the breadth of cultural diversity in wider British society.

#### 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 have excellent communication skills. Opportunities such as the school radio station and pupil-led clubs create safe spaces for pupils to develop their excellent speaking skills. These were evident in a Year 10 geography lesson, where pupils engaged in lively discussion about a class investigation into cliff erosion. Children in the EYFS have excellent phonic awareness, as seen when Reception children successfully sounded out unfamiliar words when writing about recycling litter. Year 1 pupils wrote with considerable grammatical accuracy for their age, successfully re-telling the story of the giant turnip, showing strong awareness of characters and setting in their own interpretations. Year 13 pupils



communicated imaginatively in their analysis of nature in *The Winter's Tale*, saying that the sea is passionate and unpredictable. Older pupils write competent essays in a variety of subjects. This is because they successfully apply their reading skills to interrogate information, infer from texts and improve their vocabulary. Year 7 pupils demonstrated a strong understanding of Gothic literature, confidently explaining the key features of this form, having studied a version of the story *Frankenstein*.

- 3.6 Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning which underpin much of their academic success. This is because of the high expectations set by most staff and the positive, supportive interpersonal relationships. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire felt the school equips their child with the team-working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life. In response to the questionnaire a few pupils felt that not all lessons were interesting. In a small number of lessons observed progress was comparatively more limited when pupils were less actively engaged. However, in most lessons pupils were willing participants in often challenging activities. Year 4 pupils successfully worked collaboratively in teams, to complete survival tasks in their outdoor learning lessons. In Year 12, biologists excitedly used modelling materials to explore the various models of enzyme activity. Pupils identify their own targets so that they can successfully take responsibility for their learning, because of staff encouragement to do so.
- 3.7 By the time they leave the school, pupils of all ages and abilities make excellent and often rapid progress relative to their starting points. This was confirmed by observations of pupils' work in books and in lessons and by analysis of the school's own assessment data. During the years 2018–19 two-fifths of pupils achieved A\* A grades at A level and over half of the results at GCSE were at grades 7–9. Pupils with SEND also achieved above expectations in line with the main cohort. Centre-assessed grades in 2020 and teacher-assessed grades in 2021 are consistent with these results. Results in 2022 indicate pupils have achieved even stronger results with a greater proportion of grades achieved at A\* and A at A level and 7–9 at GCSE. Almost all the students go on to study at university or on subject specific specialist courses in other equivalent institutions. Across the school pupils with SEND make excellent progress from their starting points. This is because of the effective targeted individual support that they receive in class or in individual or small group work. Pupils are supported in their achievements by leaders' meticulous use of data to track the progress of all pupils and its use to inform teachers' planning. A suitable variety of bespoke interventions to support individuals and groups of pupils are swiftly put in place.
- 3.8 Pupils have outstanding study skills. They effectively analyse a wide range of original sources, extrapolate and synthesise necessary information and use this to answer very specific questions and complete demanding tasks. Year 9 pupils used a European space agency resource to hypothesise, design, budget, test and analyse data gained from a satellite in a can. In a history lesson, pupils correctly synthesised information relating to the Russian revolution to evaluate if the source provenance was reliable. Strong skills are developed because of the focus by the school leadership on pupils being encouraged to think for themselves. This has been ensured through the development of teachers' ability to ask pertinent open-ended questions which encourage thinking.
- 3.9 Pupils have excellent knowledge and skills in all subjects across the curriculum. These skills are developed when lessons are well planned and sequential with a focus on pupil participation and engagement. Pupils' breadth of knowledge is a result of effective specialist teaching, appropriate use of specialist facilities and well-chosen resources. Pupils are confident linguists, as seen when Year 6 pupils write accurate sentences about the different features of a town in French. In a Year 13 Spanish lesson pupils effectively used complex linguistic structures to discuss the Cuban revolution. Pupils' excellent science knowledge and skills developed from an early age. Year 2 pupils showed an advanced understating of animal adaptation, whilst those in Year 6 confidently explained the key points in the difference between physical and chemical changes. Year 10 pupils successfully contrasted the response of humans and plants to stimuli from hormones. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson, pupils competently used their prior knowledge to explain the effect of changing conditions on both the rate of reaction and the position of equilibrium. Pupils have strong knowledge in human and social

subjects. Year 2 pupils correctly interpreted information from maps and plans. Pupils in Year 10 used detailed subject specific vocabulary to describe the geographical processes relating to wave and river water action. Pupils have robust physical skills across a variety of sports. Senior school pupils showed excellent hockey passing and dribbling skills whilst Year 8 dance pupils demonstrated strength, agility and physical resilience when completing a warmup routine. Pupils' aesthetic and creative skills are outstanding. From an early age pupils use a wide variety of different artistic media. Year 6 pupils made some excellent ceramic models of fruits and vegetables. Year 10 pupils display confident knowledge about the aesthetic in their designs for costume and set for 'An Inspector Calls'. Senior dancers performed with considerable aesthetic talent showcasing their version of the dance of the Valkyries in assembly.

- 3.10 Pupils are highly numerate and use their skills very effectively across the curriculum. Year 5 pupils accurately multiplied 2- and 3-digit numbers. Year 7 pupils had a strong understanding of rotational symmetry and angles. Year 2 pupils competently compared the comparative elasticity of different materials in science and those in Year 7 successfully interpreted scales and measured river length from maps. Year 9 pupils showed confident understanding of the mathematical patterns in musical rhythms. In physics pupils successfully used and rearranged equations calculating voltage, current and resistance. Sixth-form pupils successfully apply knowledge to 'real world' situations when considering mortgages and loans.
- 3.11 Pupils use ICT extremely effectively in their everyday learning across a wide variety of subjects. This is due to the impact of specialist teaching, a robust network and infrastructure and a responsive IT support team provided through governance commitment to this area. Children in the EYFS make productive use of computer software to reinforce their number skills without teacher direction. Year 6 pupils described how they created websites and code games, explaining how access to technology supports research and their ability to present information. Pupils confidently use a wide range of software programs to present ideas both graphically and visually. Year 8 physics pupils constructed electronic presentations summarising their research on questions relating to outer space. In Year 9, pupils planned how they would use complex coding programs to design a game related to mobile phone security. Pupils routinely access their learning and complete their work and additional challenges through the school's virtual learning platform, which is used to great effect by their teachers.
- 3.12 Pupils across the school achieve high levels of success in a wide variety of activities, both as individuals and as teams. Pupils have achieved national level success in swimming and county success in cross-country running, as has the under 15 netball team. Others have taken part in regional or national finals in cookery and art competitions. Pupils have demonstrated their drama talents at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and taken part in a debating competition at regional level. Pupils have received international recognition for their work relating to the environment. Pupils achieve considerable success through the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, with many achieving gold awards, and as Young Enterprise national winners. These achievements are a result of the school's commitment to breadth of provision in its extra-curricular and enrichment program. It is successful in achieving its aim to know each student as an individual and identify, develop and support their talents and strengths and to provide an environment where personal development is as important as academic success.

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

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages have excellent self-knowledge, self-confidence and resilience. Pupils demonstrate strong self-reflection where lessons were structured to facilitate review of their own progress. In a Year 6 drama lesson, pupils were extremely open to receiving praise and constructive criticism from their peers to enable improved performance. Older pupils self-select support groups and lunch time activities to improve their skills in different areas, becoming architects of their own study habits. Pupils

are highly self-confident because of the very many opportunities they are given for leadership and responsibility and through the many performance opportunities in drama and dance productions, class assemblies and concerts. Pupils are highly resilient, persevering to improve their results to the best of their ability. This reflects the strong promotion of resilience as a school core value through awards and achievements such as the Olly Owl award and certificates from the wellbeing centre.

- 3.15 Pupils demonstrate an acute awareness of how to stay safe and keep healthy. Pupils across the school know how to stay safe online because of the advice given in assemblies and through the curriculum. This was evident in Year 9 pupils' mature understanding of the danger of phishing e-mails. Pupils understand the need to eat a balanced diet, expressing gratitude in their discussion for the range of vegetables and salad bar on offer at lunch. Pupils are physically fit and active because of the many opportunities to participate in a variety of sporting activities in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, including water polo, football and the use of the fitness suite by older pupils. Pupils readily identify the state of their mental wellbeing and the steps they can take to improve it, understanding when it is appropriate to ask for time out. They speak positively about the resources the school and governance has devoted to wellbeing and the ideas and strategies generated by a dedicated wellbeing team. Sixth-form pupils understand how to adopt a healthy balance between work and rest through strategies such as mindfulness, which they acquire in life skills lessons.
- 3.16 Pupils make excellent contributions to their community and wider society. All pupils in Year 6 have a meaningful role of responsibility, such as sports and house or eco captains. Older pupils are prefects and peer and subject mentors, providing wellbeing support and general advice about personal organisation and study skills. Podcasts made by students in the radio studio are broadcast to the school and alumni community to inform and entertain. Some parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school did not listen to the views of pupils. The inspection evidence did not support these views. In discussion, pupils spoke about the many opportunities they are given to express their own interests and ideas, contribute through assembly presentations and initiate clubs and societies. The smart school council food and inclusion committees have initiated change and innovation. 'HOPE', the environmental group, have taken action to reduce waste across the school through working within the schools' paper advisory group. Pupils' interest in environmental action has been supported by governance through the provision of an environmentalist in residence. The diversity and inclusion group have been instrumental in changes made to the school uniform and ensuring greater consistency in anti-bullying and inclusion communications. Pupils contribute effectively to the wider community; prep school pupils for example have been active in instigating whole community involvement in charity selection. Year 6 pupils leading charitable fundraising in the prep school organised the preparation of Easter baskets for the local community. The whole school made ceramic models which together created an artistic interpretation on the plight of refugees, now on display in a local church. Pupils raise money for a wide variety of national and international charities, mostly through self-initiated and pupil lead activities such as organising a talent show or independently completing charity fun runs, bake sales and mufti days.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate high levels of personal morality. They show a strong sense of justice, and both respect laws and respectfully challenge them. Pupils are quick to moderate each other's behaviours and were observed to be patient and tolerant of their peers. Older pupils, as dining room monitors, act as strong role models. Pupils' behaviour around school is excellent; they are quick to show basic manners naturally, without adult prompting. Pupils in an English lesson based on Maya Angelou's poem, *And Still I Rise* articulated their sense of the importance of people being free to be themselves. Pupils recognise the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions. This is supported through the recent developments in the school behaviour management system which the pupils say gives them a clear structure of rules. Pupils are very open to mediation as a way to resolve situations and in doing so are quick to show empathy in understanding how their actions may have impacted negatively on others.

- 3.18 Pupils have a strong understanding that the decisions they make are fundamental to future success and wellbeing. The school achieves this through an open and encouraging atmosphere where pupils take responsibility for themselves. Children in the EYFS decided for themselves whether to select counting blocks or number squares to help them successfully complete mathematical activities. Year 6 pupils make their own choices of the roles of responsibility they wish to apply for. Pupils understand that they need to manage their time and make decisions on a regular basis about what help, if any, they need. Year 11 pupils choose the topics they feel they need to revise in mathematics, missing out those in which they feel more confident. Pupils make informed decisions about career choices because of the support from a dedicated careers department, lectures and discussions with alumni and parents.
- 3.19 Pupils have a deep spiritual understanding. In a Year 8 art lesson pupils designed their own 'Tree of Life' showing sensitivity to the tension between good and evil forces. Older pupils value opportunities to explore concepts of life and death through their study of different religions. They reflected on how society can be strengthened by faith, discussing how faith and spirituality influenced the choices people made. In a Year 11 English lesson pupils sensitively debated whether recited prayer is more spiritual than unrehearsed religious language. Christian pupils in the school community wanted to share bible phrases to demonstrate how their faith empowered them to be positive. Pupils' strong sense of the non-material world is supported through a focus on Christian traditions in the culture of the school such as communal prayer time in assemblies. This is valued by all in the community regardless of personal faith, as a time to reflect as is the focus on mindfulness, as is the provision of the quiet room and garden as places to be still. Pupils say they love the aesthetic setting of the school and relish the chance for peace and quiet which a walk around the campus provides.
- 3.20 Pupils have excellent social skills and work extremely effectively with others. Children in the EYFS co-operated in small groups to tidy litter and wash bottles left in their free play area as a stimulus within their work on understanding the environmental impact of rubbish. In a Year 8 dance lesson pupils worked effectively in pairs, giving suggestions and encouragement to help improve their performance for the opening bars of a dance in the style of Matthew Bourne's *Cinderella*. In a Year 11 physics lesson an interchange of ideas allowed all pupils to successfully attempt to solve voltage, current and resistance problems. Pupils' excellent social skills are developed through participation in activities such as the Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh award schemes, in their house events and because of the focus on teamwork and collaboration in the planning of many lessons.
- 3.21 Pupils value and respect the diversity in their community and the wider world, particularly in relation to personal identity. Pupils show respect for different religions, for example during a discussion in a Year 7 religious studies lesson about the importance of prayer in Islam. Pupils demonstrate sensitive respect for those who are differently abled, without being condescending or without undermining confidence. Pupils develop an understanding of cultural differences and similarities in the wider world through the art and English curriculum. Children in the EYFS contrasted their lives with that of a child in the Gambia when reading a story. A Year 4 class completed a communal picture with everyone contributing an excellent colour pencil, crayon and pen drawings of a traditional African water carrier, in the style of work by the artist Martin Bulinya. Their understanding of the cultural differences in wider British society are less well developed. Pupils' respect for other cultures is developed through sharing the traditions of their peers when they speak in assembly about Purim for example or demonstrate traditional Hindu dancing.

#### 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 a group 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

Mrs Vivien Sergeant	Reporting inspector
Mrs Loren Macallister	Compliance team inspector and team inspector (Head, IAPS School)
Mr Stuart Bain	Team inspector (Principal, ISA school)
Mrs Sylvia Brett	Team inspector (Principal, GSA school)
Mrs Rosemary Chapman	Team inspector (Senior leader, HMC school)
Mr David James	Team inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)