



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St John's School

May 2023

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School's Details

School	St John's School			
DfE number	312/6059			
Registered charity number	1063738			
Address	St John's School Potter Street Hill Northwood Middlesex HA6 3QY			
Telephone number	0208 866 0067			
Email address	office@st-johns.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Tom Jenkin			
Chair of governors	Mr James Fowler			
Proprietor	Merchant Taylors' Educational Trust			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	341			
	EYFS	59	Pre-prep and Prep juniors (Years 1–4)	144
	Prep (Years 5– 8)	138		
Inspection dates	16 to 18 May 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St John's School is an independent day school. It is registered as a single sex school for male pupils and comprises three sections: nursery, pre-prep and prep. Founded in Pinner in 1920, it moved to its present location in Northwood in 1970. The school is a registered charity and has been owned by the Merchant Taylors' Educational Trust since 1984. It is overseen by its own governing body appointed by the Merchant Taylors' Educational Trust.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has created a new sports hall. The headmaster has been in post since September 2022 and the current chair of governors was appointed in July 2022.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to enable pupils to extend and develop his talents and interests, grow in confidence and fulfil his potential. The objective is to prepare pupils for each stage of their education, enabling them to become 'life-long learners' within a stimulating environment. The school expects high standards of behaviour and encourages respect for others, with all members of the school community being valued.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Most pupils live locally and come from families with professional backgrounds. Standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified 28 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, of whom 15 receive additional support. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language for 22 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The curriculum is modified for pupils identified as being the most able in the school's population.

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, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education 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.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are

maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

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

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. 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>
Lambs	Nursery
Robins	Reception
Squirrels	Reception
Otters	Year One
Owls	Year One
Badgers	Year Two
Eagles	Year Two

Key findings

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

- Throughout the school, pupils' communication skills are outstanding.
- Pupils' academic and other successes are significant. Many pupils achieve scholarships to their senior schools in a wide range of areas.
- Pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum.
- From an early age, pupils show strong capability and confidence when using information and communication technology (ICT).

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

- Pupils are fully invested in making positive contributions to the school community and the lives of others in the wider world.
- Pupils show an outstanding understanding of cultural diversity. They are accepting of each other's nationalities, cultures, religions and beliefs.
- Pupils show strong self-understanding for their age. They exhibit high levels of self-esteem and confidence.
- Pupils' overall behaviour is excellent; however, a few prep pupils do not always meet the school's expectations for their conduct at breaktime.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
- Encourage further older pupils' pride in their presentation of work.
 - Enable all prep school pupils to consistently meet the school's expectation for high standards of behaviour towards others.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Throughout the school, pupils' communication skills are outstanding. They are highly articulate, using sophisticated vocabulary to talk about a range of subjects, and they actively listen to each other and respond appropriately. Nursery children engage in relevant conversation with adults in the role play florist, serving them flowers. Year 1 pupils accurately use words such as nocturnal and conservation. Year 4 displayed excellent communication skills while working in pairs to research Argentina. Pupils demonstrate an enjoyment of reading and listening to stories. Reception children are keen to decode words and diagraphs as learning to read is made fun through playing outdoor games. Year 2 pupils were able to use their extensive knowledge of stories to work out from a set of clues an unidentified book. Older pupils take on roles of librarians and write book reviews to encourage those younger to read. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils used sophisticated language while discussing the effects of the imagery of water used in the play *Of Mice and Men*. Pupils display high levels of competence when writing for a range of purposes. Nursery children chose to create their own information books, using recognisable letters, while those in the pre-prep spoke of their enjoyment in writing creative stories. Outstanding examples of creative writing were seen, such as in emotive writing recalling the experiences of a soldier in the trenches during World War 1 by Year 7 pupils.
- 3.6 Pupils' academic and other successes are significant and are celebrated at every opportunity. In the Pre-prep, pupils' achievements are celebrated in assemblies. In sport, all prep pupils have an opportunity to play in competitive fixtures across the ability range where they achieve some success, such as during a recent athletics match where individuals came first in high jump, javelin and 1500 metres. Across other areas of learning, pupils do well in competitions at regional and national levels. For example, some prep pupils recently achieved places on the leader board in a national general knowledge challenge, while Year 2 came second nationally in the Word Mania word building challenge. Almost all pupils play musical instruments and have achieved outstanding success in examinations. Similarly, pupils achieve well in LAMDA examinations and perform to a high standard in dramatic performances, with pupils enthusiastically speaking of their preparations for the end of year production of *The Lion King*. Many pupils achieve scholarships to their senior schools in a wide range of areas, including for music, art, sport, drama and academic achievement.
- 3.7 Pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. They quickly absorb new information and demonstrate high levels of confidence when applying their knowledge in classroom activities. For example, Nursery children expertly planted their own runner beans, explaining the process and how they will grow during a free choice activity linked to the class planting topic. In science, Year 8 pupils demonstrated much competency in their project work on biodiversity, confidently using a range of equipment and experiments. In Latin, Year 6 pupils confidently worked on expressions of questions and adjectival agreement. Pupils develop outstanding musical ability as evidenced by the highly skilled strings orchestra. The use of open-ended questioning and challenging discussions elicits the very best out of the pupils who rise to whatever is asked of them. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils wholeheartedly engaged in the carefully scaffolded discussion around rhyming words for their poems.

- 3.8 Pupils are competent users of ICT. As they progress through the school, they gain the necessary skills to use technology for a range of tasks and learn how to keep safe whilst doing so. From an early age, pupils show much capability and confidence when using ICT. For example, Reception children ably completed a mathematics activity that built on their previous learning and were able to log off by themselves. Year 1 pupils used devices competently in an art lesson to replicate a David Hockney painting, while Year 6 pupils enthusiastically used computers to design their contributions for their yearbook. Prep pupils use ICT seamlessly across the curriculum and this adds considerably to their acquisition of knowledge through research, such as the analysis of data in science and geography and in the creation of posters, slide presentations and images in English and history.
- 3.9 Pupils across the age range make mainly excellent progress from their starting points, and overall attainment is above average in relation to national age-related expectations. This was evident from lesson observations, scrutiny of work, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of standardised assessment data. Pupils with SEND and EAL make good progress. The majority of EYFS children meet the expected levels of development by the time they leave Reception. Leaders ensure that pupils' progress is tracked as they move up through the school, with data used effectively to help shape their future learning. Pupils benefit from supportive teachers who encourage them to give of their best. They embrace challenge and proudly explain how they have extended their skills over time. The school successfully meets its aim to encourage pupils to extend and develop their talents and interests, so that they can grow in confidence and fulfil their potential. Pupils explained how the school has helped them to achieve this by offering careers advice, a wide variety of extra-curricular options, as well as clinics to help them improve their subject work. By the time they reach Year 8, pupils are performing significantly above their chronological age. They are extremely successful in gaining places to academically selective schools.
- 3.10 Pupils acquire strong numeracy skills and demonstrate excellent ability in this area. Pre-prep pupils' understanding has been strengthened due to leaders' decision, with support from governors, to create their own curriculum based on practical mathematics. Reception children demonstrated a growing interest and ability in addition, challenging themselves to solve addition of larger numbers up to 100 and beyond. Year 1 pupils demonstrated a solid understanding of how to measure the volume of liquid, using their wider mathematical skills to work out how much more some vessels held than others. In a Year 7 lesson on the translation of shapes, pupils showed highly focused and independent mathematical abilities making clear progress. Mathematics is woven throughout the curriculum, with the result that pupils ably apply their skills and recognise how they interlink. Year 3 pupils recalled their learning on fractions to explain how the ocean coverage of the globe is two-thirds, while those in Year 5 translated the date in French, using the numerical system to work this out.
- 3.11 Pupils exhibit excellent study skills. EYFS children are keen to investigate, such as by studying a bug they had found using a magnifying glass. Pupils in the pre-prep make well-considered predictions about what might happen in their science experiments. Across the school, pupils are able to use a range of resources to aid their learning, particularly online where they use various applications. They are confident to ask questions and self-evaluate their work. Pupils display excellent research skills, such as when Year 5 pupils researched astronomers in science. In the final term, Year 8 pupils engage enthusiastically in a broader curriculum with many open-ended tasks to stretch their study skills in preparation for their move to senior school. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 benefit from the discrete study skills lessons that the senior leadership team have recently introduced to help prepare them for their external examinations in Year 6. Pupils explained how helpful it was to learn and practice a range of techniques, reflecting on which worked best for them. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school equips their child with the team-working, collaborative and research skills that they need in later life.
- 3.12 The school successfully fulfils its aim to provide a stimulating environment so that each pupil can develop a positive and self-disciplined approach to learning and life. Pupils enjoy their learning. They

are enthusiastic and overall engage well in lessons. They are keen to contribute ideas and share their own knowledge with others. Children in the Nursery worked collaboratively to build a train track. Those in the pre-prep display excellent independence when coming in in the morning and were disciplined in changing for physical education (PE) lessons. Year 5 pupils persevered to make tangram shapes, encouraging each other by making suggestions about strategies for success. Pupils are inquisitive and confident to ask questions to extend their knowledge and understanding. Year 1 pupils readily asked teachers what words meant in their reading books. Pre-prep and junior prep pupils take much pride in the presentation of their written work, as seen in their books and displays around the school. Inspectors noted that older pupils' presentation of work across subjects is not consistently of the same high standard. Pupils demonstrate great initiative and independence both in their work and play. For example, they take the lead when both collecting and returning play equipment.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have an excellent understanding of their roles in the school community and the wider society due to the emphasis the school places on these from the moment they join. EYFS children look after their own belongings and carry their own trays in the dining hall, while older pre-prep children act as playtime carers. Pupils who take on roles of responsibility, such as by being on the eco-council, take their roles seriously and make a valuable contribution. Pupils in Year 8 maturely carry out their leadership positions such as prefects and house captains, acting as excellent role models for those who are younger. Older pupils enjoy pairing up with EYFS children on charity days, such as for Red Nose Day. Pupils in Years 5 to 8 act as mentors, providing valuable advice to those who are younger. This helps them understand what happens higher up in the school. Pupils raise considerable amounts of money for charities. They have a strong appreciation of the world around them, making efforts to support campaigns and organisations such as The Prince's Trust, food banks and the Turkey and Syria relief fund.
- 3.15 In line with one of the schools' aims, pupils are particularly sensitive of the need to respect the cultural identity, feelings and beliefs of everyone in the community. They have an outstanding understanding of diversity and are wholly accepting of each other's nationalities, cultures, religions and beliefs. Pupils accept and welcome others into the St John's family. This is a real strength of the school. They enjoy learning about their own backgrounds as well as those different to their own. Pupils explained how they are proud that the school considered the needs of the children who were observing Ramadan. They have a broad understanding of diversity because the school enables discussion, including through an online voting platform where pupils wisely debate issues such as whether language in books should be changed, comparing that to the removal of statues associated with slavery. Pupils in the pre-prep demonstrate vast enjoyment in learning about the lives and traditions of people from across the world and are proud to share their own experiences with others. This growing awareness has been successfully fostered through leader's decision to introduce the subject of 'international studies' to this age group. Year 2 pupils spoke with much sensitivity about the racism and injustice of the apartheid system.
- 3.16 Pupils show excellent self-understanding for their age. They have high levels of self-esteem and confidence, as evidenced in discussions. In the EYFS, children are comfortable choosing their own activities and engage with adults easily. Pupils are resilient, with Year 2 pupils explaining that they learn from mistakes. Throughout the school, pupils interact positively with marking by replying to comments made by teachers. This demonstrates how they understand the targets set. They know what areas they need to work on and are not afraid to be given advice. Pupils in Year 5 effectively self-assess and peer assess their English writing work using success criteria. In after school rounders club, Year 3 pupils demonstrated a high degree of self-belief and confidence whilst recognising and

reflecting upon their current ability and desire to improve their skills. The school successfully achieves its aim to prepare every pupil for each stage in their educational career, and to become a 'life-long learner'. In discussion, older pupils said that they feel well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- 3.17 Pupils' decision-making skills are well developed. They understand that they are responsible for making the right decisions in relation to their work and behaviour. Nursery children eagerly choose activities during outdoor learning sessions, engaging in their chosen activity for long periods of time, such as while riding bikes and filling large teapots with water. As they progress through the school, pupils grow in self-esteem and are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. They make sensible choices and understand the impact their decisions can have on their future success and on those around them. For instance, Year 7 pupils explained that the more work they put in, the greater the rewards will be. Prep pupils were able to comment openly on occasions when choices had to be made and were clear about the consequences of poor decision-making. Pupils are fully involved in making wider school decisions through school forums such as the school council. Through this, they are catalysts of change, deciding on ways to make the school a better place, for example they decided that a screen for information in the dining hall would be useful, and this is now installed.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate a strong appreciation of non-material aspects of life, notably through their love of nature. Children in the EYFS excitedly explained the web cam footage of baby birds that have recently hatched in the school bird box. Pupils in Year 1 showed tremendous enthusiasm when looking at trees and flowers in the woodland environment. Pupils embrace the opportunity for quiet reflection, such as engaging in yoga sessions on a recent Year 6 residential trip. Pupils value the schools' code of conduct and understand that attributes such as kindness are very important. They are spiritually aware. For example, some Year 8 pupils showed a mature understanding for their age of the consequences of losing loved ones through cancer. Pupils readily recognise the need to empathise with others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils develop a deep appreciation of a range of faiths, and a strong sense of community, as they celebrate the religious festivals of their peers and participate in assemblies and discussions throughout the year.
- 3.19 Pupils' social awareness is strong. This is developed through the many opportunities for pre-prep pupils to work together as they do in the woodland learning environment, such as by building dens and developing transient art. In class, pupils are as happy to work independently as in pairs or groups. Even when working independently, they are quick to see the needs of others and offer support. For example, pre-prep pupils recognised that others were struggling to use a pair of scissors, offering theirs to help. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils were very motivated to complete a mathematics challenge to earn house points that contribute to the house system. Pupils described how they work successfully as a team, such as in ICT where they created their own collaborative website on a topic of their choice.
- 3.20 Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Children in the EYFS understand the importance of taking care of their bodies through visits from professionals such as dentists. Pupils appreciate the need to adopt a healthy diet and eat balanced meals. They embrace physical activity and understand the benefits of this. Year 4 pupils explained how initiatives such as 'Walk to School Week' help keep them healthy. Pre-prep pupils commented that exercise is important as it keeps their hearts pumping. Pupils are comfortable in sharing their thoughts within circle time and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons. Their mental health is further supported through leaders' decision to appoint a school counsellor. Pupils are well-equipped with age-appropriate knowledge to help keep them safe, be it whilst crossing the road, during activities, or online. For example, Year 2 pupils explained how they needed to wear helmets and harnesses whilst using zip wires and high swing during the recent residential trip. In discussion, pupils in Years 5 and 6 explained that there was extensive online safety training and felt confident in what to do should they be faced with a problem whilst using a device online.

3.21 Pupils embrace the school motto 'be true to yourself', with those spoken with during the inspection explaining that this means 'You have to be honest'. Pupils typically have a strong moral understanding and generally behave well in line with the school code of conduct. In the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils disagreed that pupils are kind and respect each other. Inspectors found that pupils almost always behave respectfully with the oldest pupils in the school acting as excellent role models. Pupils spoken to were very clear of the need to respect others. Children in the EYFS comfortably engage in activities alongside others. There is a harmonious atmosphere as children are kind to one another. Pre-prep pupils are clear about the 'golden rules', spontaneously listing them and explaining how they help set expectations for all. Prep pupils also have a secure understanding of the code of conduct as they have helped shape this through the school council. Inspectors observed that occasionally a small number of prep pupils found it difficult to fully adhere to the behavioural expectations while engaging in breaktime activities. Pupils demonstrate a growing understanding of the place that rules and laws have in the school community and wider world. They take their right to vote seriously, explaining how they carefully select peers to put forward as council leaders. Older pupils have a clear idea of democracy and the voting system.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and safeguarding governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and an assembly. 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

Miss Jacqueline Scotney	Reporting inspector
Mr Guy Barrett	Compliance team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Jonathan Carroll	Team inspector (Former headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Louise Lawrance	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)