

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

Headington School

January 2023

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Mrs Caroline J	ordan		
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Headington Sc	hool Oxfor	d Ltd	
11 to 18			
817			
Day pupils	626	Boarders	191
Seniors	597	Sixth Form	220
17 to 19 Janua			
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School's Details

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Headington School is an independent day and boarding school for female pupils. It was originally founded in 1915 and is a charitable trust, overseen by a council of governors, who also oversee Headington Preparatory School, which was inspected at the same time. There are five boarding houses, all located on the main school site.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has ceased to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

What the school seeks to do

1.3 The school aims to provide a stimulating, enriching and forward-thinking environment where pupils are encouraged, challenged and valued. It intends that pupils develop honesty, openness, tolerance and understanding; and that they learn to think of others, and become self-confident, independent and responsible, able to play an active part in a changing world.

About the pupils

1.4 Nationally standardised assessment 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 162 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia and other conditions, of whom 34 receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 115 pupils, of whom six have additional help. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The curriculum is modified for those pupils it identifies as 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, 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 <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> <u>Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools,</u>

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 GCSE and A-level results in the years 2020 to 2022 confirm 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 and sex education, 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, 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 wellbeing 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:

School name	National Curriculum name
Upper Third	Year 7
Lower Fourth	Year 8
Upper Fourth	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
 - The achievement of all groups of pupils in public examinations is excellent.
 - Pupils' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking are excellent.
 - Pupils display outstanding levels of numeracy and digital skills and well-developed analytical thinking.
 - Pupils' achievements in academic and other pursuits outside the classroom are excellent.
 - Pupils' attitudes are highly supportive of their learning.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils have excellent levels of self-confidence, self-knowledge and self-esteem, and they are always keen to improve their work.
 - Pupils have a highly developed appreciation of the non-material aspects of their lives and display strong creativity and spirituality.
 - Pupils' social awareness and capacity for fruitful collaboration are excellent.
 - Pupils treat one another with kindness and respect, accepting every member of the community equally.

• Pupils are self-aware and understand how to maintain balance in their lives in order to stay physically and mentally healthy.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
 - Strengthen senior pupils' knowledge of possible future career pathways.

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' academic achievements are excellent, as confirmed by examination results at GCSE and A-level. At GCSE, the centre- and teacher-assessed grades awarded in 2020 and 2021 reflected high levels of attainment. In 2022, similar standards were maintained. Over two-fifths of all entries were awarded the top grade, and nearly two-thirds the top two grades. At A level, over a third of grades awarded were at the top grade, and nearly three-quarters at the top two grades. This picture is consistent with the inspectors' observations of pupils' performance in lessons and work. Data provided by the school indicate that all groups of pupils, including those with EAL and SEND, achieve equally well. Teachers know how their pupils learn and they match tasks effectively to their abilities and prior attainment. Furthermore, teachers and pupils work collaboratively to rehearse key examination skills to give pupils the best chance of success. In addition to achieving high marks, pupils develop into skilled and resilient learners, well equipped to cope with the future. Pupils have responded successfully to the broadening of the sixth form curriculum since the previous inspection, particularly the introduction of several new options such as photography, dance, history of art and philosophy, which are well suited to the skills and abilities of a range of pupils. Pupils progress to a wide range of courses at universities in the UK and abroad, including those with highly competitive entry requirements. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress. The school meets its aim to provide a stimulating environment where pupils are encouraged, challenged and valued.
- 3.6 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are outstanding. They make rapid progress in response to highly effective teaching which uses a range of methods and resources. Expectations are high from teachers and from the pupils themselves. Pupils transfer and apply their knowledge and skills quickly from subject to subject. For example, in a food and nutrition lesson, pupils combined an accurate understanding of the instructions with manual dexterity and measuring skill. The result drew on linguistic, mathematical, scientific and physical abilities. Similarly, pupils exhibit highly developed knowledge and skills in foreign languages. They understand and use a rich vocabulary and deploy their linguistic skills effectively. For example, pupils' written solutions in mathematics, are clear, rigorous and detailed, utilising helpful diagrams to represent information and analyse problems. Most pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons.
- 3.7 Pupils have excellent communication skills. They read widely, prompted by initiatives from the library and elsewhere, so that they have a rich range of expression available to them. Pupils write with equal care and precision on gothic literature and influential women. They respond well to plentiful opportunities to write at length. Likewise, pupils speak fluently and persuasively, using sophisticated and appropriate language. This is true of their social interactions, and of their oral work in class, where they display a secure grasp of subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils are respectful and attentive listeners, weighing others' words carefully and responding appropriately, and they are used to the paired and group work which are common features of many lessons.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate excellent numeracy skills which they use to support their work across a range of subjects. They measure accurately when cooking, calculate heart rates in physical education lessons and successfully apply mathematical formulae to solving economics questions. They are confident to

use their numeracy in calculating density in science or devising an appropriate scale for estimating distances between planets in the astronomy club. Specialist teaching in mathematics ensures that such confidence and ability are present across the ability and age range. Pupils attribute this to the habit of 'goal free' exercises, where they are encouraged to see what they can ascertain from the evidence rather than being required to find evidence to support a pre-existing answer.

- 3.9 Pupils are highly competent users of information and communication technology (ICT) and can judge when its use could be most helpful. For example, they are quick to see the advantages of composing music using specialist software, accessing material in advance of a lesson, researching effectively, and using QR codes to find additional resources. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that use of ICT enables the pace of lessons to be adapted to suit them in many contexts. Pupils use ICT ably to take responsibility for organising their own homework schedules. Teaching enables pupils to use ICT effectively. For example, lessons are often centred around a shared document, to which all contribute, enabling peer-critique and collaboration over content and structure. Pupils enrich their learning by accessing teaching material and resources digitally, in response to the school's provision of devices to all pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- 3.10 Pupils' study skills are excellent. They draw knowledge from a wide range of sources and synthesise the information to reach conclusions. For example, in a junior science lesson, pupils carefully analysed a range of data relating to particle theory and how potassium crystals react to water. Senior mathematicians used well-developed analytical and thinking skills to generate a question to match a given solution. Pupils of all ages are successful in offering hypotheses in response to questions which invite them to speculate confidently, because thinking critically and creatively is central to the school's aims. Pupils learn to research effectively, with many taking the Higher Project Qualification in Year 10 and the Extended Project Qualification in Year 12. Pupils become increasingly conscious of how they learn most successfully, which enables them to become more proficient learners.
- 3.11 Pupils' academic and other achievements are outstanding. They attain notable success in individual and team games, with many winning representative honours at local and national level, for example in rowing, cross-country, netball, hockey and football. Similarly, pupils achieve high standards in instrumental and choral music in response to the extensive individual music tuition programme. Pupils excel in performing arts. The school's first A-level dance pupils have won places at conservatoires to study dance, and there has been individual success in the National Youth Dance Company. Entrants in Royal Academy of Dance ballet examinations have achieved high grades. Of nearly a hundred candidates, almost all achieved merit or distinction in the Trinity College speech and drama awards, and six were at diploma level. In response to the school's programme of co-curricular and supra-curricular activities, pupils thrive and develop their knowledge and skills. Pupils say they acquire significant skills and self-knowledge through, for example, the Combined Cadet Force, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, the Model United Nations and a range of fundraising initiatives in the UK and elsewhere. Pupils also achieve highly in science Olympiads, UK Maths Challenges and essay prize competitions in different subjects. A very large majority of boarders who responded to the questionnaire said that they could get help with their academic work in their houses.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes to learning are characterised by a proactive approach, whereby they are interested in extending and deepening their learning on their own account. Pupils are also generous and willing to volunteer questions and answers, to comment helpfully on others' work and to offer their own for consideration. An A-level politics lesson featured pupils explaining the concepts behind different voting systems to one another until everyone understood. Equally, pupils focus carefully when asked to work individually, dividing integers by decimals, or grappling with verb forms. Collaboration extends to the pupils' support of their teachers, indicative of the way they make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. Pupils make and organise notes with an awareness of how they would be likely to be of use later.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils' self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge are excellent. Pupils develop into resilient, independent, curious learners, who understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and who understand how to improve further. Pupils attribute much of this development to what takes place in the classroom. They take responsibility for their own progress in responding to feedback from teachers on their work, seeing this as an opportunity to enrich and elevate the quality and scope of their writing in English, for example. They show courage in taking risks which enhance their learning in this way. Similarly, they consider the merits of others' thinking in response to the process of 'think, pair and share'. Pupils also recognise the role played in their personal growth, by co-curricular activity and by the boarding ethos of the school. In the questionnaire, a very large majority of boarders said that they felt safe in their boarding houses, that the school understood their needs and listened to them and treated them fairly. Through organising a house event, or taking on a junior leadership role, or helping new boarders settle in, pupils learn to understand and value their own contribution to the community. This development is further enhanced by the tutor system and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. In accordance with the school's highly successful strategy to make pupils 'future-ready', they develop the key skills of confidence, collaboration, creativity, curiosity, courage and compassion. The school meets its aim to enable pupils to become self-confident, independent and responsible, able to play an active part in a changing world.
- 3.15 Pupils make sensible and considerate decisions, for the benefit of their community, and on their own account. The school's leaders listen to their views, encouraging them to understand that they matter. Pupils have influenced, for example, classroom practice over matters of questioning and collaboration. They choose their GCSE and A-level subjects based on an understanding of their own strengths and interests and are actively encouraged to think about their own future pathways in an individual way. This has led to a widening of the choices made by pupils as they prepare to move on to the next stage of their lives. Sixth form pupils feel well supported by the school in this. However, a small minority of senior pupils who responded to questionnaire and spoke to the inspectors said that they would welcome more formal guidance in order to strengthen their understanding about possible career pathways. Pupils manage their own school commitments expertly, for example, balancing the demands of skill acquisition in sport with the need for strength and conditioning.
- 3.16 Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. Governors and school leaders have encouraged this through enhanced facilities for theatre, dance, music, design and engineering, and food and nutrition, and by expanding the A-level curriculum. The Creativity and Innovation Centre, known as The Hive, stands at the heart of the school campus: many pupils said that they continue to regard creative pursuits as an important part of their school lives even if their academic paths have gone in a different direction. Pupils speak warmly of the sense of belonging to the cast of a play or a music ensemble, comparing it to being in a team or a house. Pupils said that they appreciate, too, the feel of a pencil by contrast with a digital device, or the aesthetic element of handling a book rather than reading from a screen. Pupils explore with curiosity the spiritual dimension of their lives, pointing particularly to weekly assemblies and religious studies lessons as opportunities to reflect.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate outstanding moral awareness and understanding of the network of obligations which bind the house, class, or social group. They understand the potential negative impact of individual behaviour. Pupils can explain why they hold particular values. A dance class, for example, illustrated the imbalance of power in the relationship between master and slave, and the pupils' awareness of the issues of injustice inherent there. Their morality is underpinned by the Christian ethos of the school and nourished by their curiosity about other faiths. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, and they understand the need for rules and sanctions. They are intolerant of inappropriate behaviour or language, especially bullying. In the pre-inspection survey, a small minority of pupils did not agree that pupils treated one another with kindness and respect, or that the school treated them fairly. In discussion, however, they said that kindness and respect were the norm, and

that exceptions were rare. They accepted, too, that the school's disciplinary systems were seldom invoked, and that this was usually done fairly.

- 3.18 Pupils have an excellent level of social awareness, often developed through work in the classroom. A discussion about the validity of religious experience in a junior religious studies lesson saw pupils demonstrate sensitivity, respect and deep interest in the lives of others. In a GCSE French lesson, pupils worked effectively in pairs answering complex questions and reflecting on the positive aspects of others' performance on the same task. Boarding life promotes social cohesion and collaboration. Pupils' social awareness is also developed in co-curricular activities, which develop aspects of teamwork and awareness of others' strengths and weaknesses. Pupils support one another emotionally and practically, including across age groups, both informally and through formal mentoring structures. This can take the form of sharing thoughts about anxiety or helping to identify the correct process of calculating equivalent fractions. Equally, it can take the form of helping others by pooling laundry or organising a charity event to provide coats for the homeless. Pupils say that they feel more confident with all these tasks as a result of doing them collaboratively. In the pre-inspection survey, almost all parents said that the school taught strong teamwork and social skills.
- 3.19 Pupils make a strong contribution to the lives of others in these ways, volunteering for leadership responsibilities in their houses, societies or year groups. They also work hard to recognise the needs of others in the wider community, whether on a global scale or contributing to the local hospital. Pupilled societies such as the philosophy society or Amnesty command a large following because pupils say that they want to be well informed about important contemporary and other issues. Likewise, groups focus on sustainability through recycling projects and collections for food banks. They care for the school environment and look after it well. They also invest time and energy in the school's partnership with primary schools, notably a day of music-making culminating in a concert hosted by the pupils. In line with the school's aims, pupils show notable compassion for others.
- 3.20 Pupils' respect for diversity and cultural understanding is excellent. The boarding houses form a harmonious community which accepts all its members on an equal basis, including the forty nationalities represented. Pupils do not just accept those who are different from themselves but recognise the way that its international character enriches the school. An A-level French lesson based on a film featured a discussion on race and hatred and showed pupils' sensitivity, and their awareness and understanding of the issues. The diversity ambassadors and international prefect team lead the way on this, planning and presenting assemblies to the school. Others generally show heightened understanding. They identified, for example, cultural appropriation when it arose in a recent dance competition. The blend of boarders and day pupils contributes to pupils' sense of belonging to a diverse group. Religious tolerance is second nature, partly in response to methodical coverage of different faith systems in lessons. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. The school meets its aim to enable pupils to develop honesty, openness, tolerance and understanding.
- 3.21 Pupils have an extremely well-developed understanding of how to be safe and healthy. They engage enthusiastically in the school's programme of sport and outdoor activity, they embrace a balanced lifestyle, and they know why it is important. Pupils understand the importance of good nutrition and a balanced diet, encouraged by the school's catering department. Pupils also have a strong sense of how to maintain good mental health. They speak highly of the school's personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme and pastoral provision in its different forms-promoting wellbeing and offering a counselling service. Sources of support and advice are readily available. Pupils also confirm that they know how to stay safe online. They are given timely advice through PSHE, computing lessons and assemblies. In the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils indicated that they could not speak to an adult in school if they had a concern. In discussion, however, all pupils who spoke to the inspectors could think of someone in whom they placed trust and confidence. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that they understand how to stay safe when online.

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 form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Bill Burn	Reporting inspector
Mrs Wendy Barrett	Compliance team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Mary Bailey	Team inspector (Compliance officer, IAPS school)
Mr Bill Chadwick	Team inspector (Former deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Stephanie Piper	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Oliver Stokes	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mrs Lou Belrhiti	Team inspector for boarding (Former deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Gomm	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, HMC school)