

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

King's Hall School

October 2022

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King's Hall Sch	ool		
933/6187			
1103346			
King's Hall Sch	ool		
Kingston Road			
Taunton			
Somerset			
TA2 8AA			
01823 285920			
schooloffice@kingshalltaunton.co.uk			
Mr Justin Chippendale			
Mrs Linda Nash			
2 to 13			
299			
Day pupils	267	Boarders	32
Pre-prep	99	Prep	200
18 to 20 Octob	ber 2022		
	933/6187 1103346 King's Hall Sch Kingston Road Taunton Somerset TA2 8AA 01823 285920 schooloffice@ Mr Justin Chip Mrs Linda Nas 2 to 13 299 Day pupils Pre-prep	1103346 King's Hall School Kingston Road Taunton Somerset TA2 8AA 01823 285920 schooloffice@kingshalltar Mr Justin Chippendale Mrs Linda Nash 2 to 13 299 Day pupils 267	933/6187 1103346 King's Hall School Kingston Road Taunton Somerset TA2 8AA 01823 285920 schooloffice@kingshalltaunton.co.uk Mr Justin Chippendale Mrs Linda Nash 2 to 13 299 Day pupils 267 Boarders Pre-prep 99 Prep

School's Details

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 King's Hall School is a co-educational independent day and boarding school. It is owned by the Woodard Schools group and is governed by the Council, which also forms the governing body of King's College Taunton, with which King's Hall School is closely associated. The school is formed of two sections, pre-prep for children aged two to seven, and the prep for pupils aged seven to thirteen. Boarding accommodation is located within the main school building.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has refurbished several areas of the school including the dining room, boarding accommodation and several pre-prep classrooms.

What the school seeks to do

1.3 The school aims to provide an education rooted in the Woodard Christian ethos, whilst welcoming pupils of other faiths. It seeks to ensure that pupils are happy and fulfilled, with a desire for excellence, and that they develop independent, searching minds in a tolerant and supportive environment. The school endeavours to ensure that all are challenged to develop wide interests in every area of school life, to achieve high standards and to realise the importance of contributing to the community inside and beyond school.

About the pupils

1.4 Most pupils come from professional and business families drawn from the local area. Boarders come from both the United Kingdom, including military personnel, and from a range of other countries. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. Of the 55 pupils identified by the school as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities, 45 receive support for a range of additional learning needs, including dyslexia and dyspraxia. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 23 pupils for whom English is an additional language, most of whom receive additional support for their English. The curriculum is modified for the most able pupils and those who have special talents in art, music, drama, technology and sport.

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. 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, 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, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory</u> <u>Framework</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 relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the school and relationships and sex education in Years 7 and 8, 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 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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 14 are met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 2 are met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

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

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

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

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
 - Pupils achieve highly across all areas of learning.
 - Pupils' communication skills are of a high quality, and they share their thoughts and ideas with great enthusiasm.
 - Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are eager to always give of their best to please their teachers.
 - Pupils develop an excellent range of skills and knowledge due to the many and varied opportunities provided.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils demonstrate an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and healthy.
 - Pupils display a natural self-confidence that is engaging and reflects an environment where they feel happy and secure.
 - Pupils are strong social citizens in a community that values them for their individuality.
 - Pupils of all ages are morally mature, and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
 - Strengthen pupils' progress by ensuring that teaching always engages them in an interesting and meaningful way.

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 of all ages are high achievers, whether this be in their lessons, on the sports field or when using art tools. This success ranges from their aptitude in English through to their timings on the park run around the school grounds. Pupils make rapid progress from their excellent foundation in the early pre-prep. This is shown in the pupils' books and reflected in the discussions where pupils spoke confidently about the progress they had made. Pupils are also successful at the point of entry to their chosen secondary schools, where many compete successfully for awards and scholarships.

- 3.6 School assessment data show that pupils of all ages achieve well when compared to those who take the same tests nationally. Pupils of both genders and all abilities, including those with SEND and EAL, make at least good and often rapid progress across the curriculum. This progress is supported by the way in which pupils measure their own progress against targets. School leaders use data effectively to identify any patterns or trends and then respond appropriately. For example, in the pre-prep it was identified that comprehension skills could be improved. Additional support was put in place by way of extra reading times. This saw comprehension skills improve. In discussions and in the pre-inspection questionnaire, boarders stated that they feel that boarding helps them with their academic achievement because of the help and support they receive. This view was unanimously supported by the parents of boarders who responded to the questionnaire. School leaders and managers ensure that the school successfully meets its aims to ensure high standards and to strive for excellence.
- 3.7 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum are of a high standard due to effective teaching and a broad and balanced educational experience, ensured by school leaders and managers. This was evidenced by inspection activities, including lesson observations and work scrutiny. This success has its foundations in the EYFS where the children develop elements such as fine and gross motor skills which are expertly honed through the pre-prep. By the time the pupils leave the school they are equipped with a set of skills that is extremely diverse, ranging from identifying pentatonic scales in music to dissecting excerpts from *Macbeth* in English. The strength of pupils' skills and knowledge is supported through boarding as the experiences are wide and varied in both the evenings and at weekends. However, progress and the development of knowledge and skills are sometimes inhibited when teaching lacks creativity and dynamism and features a didactic approach and an over-reliance on photocopied resources.
- 3.8 Pupils of all ages are excellent communicators. They speak with confidence and clarity. This is because pupils have been brought up in a school environment where they feel happy and confident, and they know that they will not be judged should they make a mistake. In the EYFS, Nursery children greet visitors with a warm smile and a cheery hello. Pupils speak about how everyone's contributions to discussions are valued equally and say that the school really supports them in this aspect. Pupils listen intently to their teachers and peers and as a result they make excellent progress. Pupils are highly competent communicators in both the spoken and written word. They write well for a variety of audiences, such as when prep school pupils produced a piece of descriptive writing in a history activity. Pupils wrote imaginatively about the features and benefits of a Viking sailboat in an attempt to persuade a prospective buyer to purchase it. Pupils of all ages, including in the pre-prep, read confidently and with understanding. Older pupils interpret and answer questions about text applying skills of inference and deduction. Pupil success in this area stems from school leaders and managers who ensure that there are many opportunities available. In discussions with inspectors, boarders spoke enthusiastically about the 'Topic of Conversation' activity where they are all given a theme to discuss on subjects such as the worst food that you have ever eaten or superhero powers. They enjoyed sharing thoughts with others on their table and then having to come to a consensus.
- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate strong levels of competency in numeracy, and this is developed by teaching that provides stimulation and challenge. The pupils' achievement in this area is based on the firm foundations laid in the early pre-prep. For example, children in Nursery confidently count up to ten whilst older pre-prep pupils show a strong awareness of place value and counting forwards and backwards from two-digit numbers. Younger prep pupils showed an excellent understanding of the concept of halving, moving from the answer being a whole number to being a mixed number. Older prep pupils display competence in the ways they approached and succeeded in algebraic problems. Pupils of all ages readily apply their mathematical understanding to other areas of learning. For example, in workbooks pupils in Year 7 effectively produced and used bar charts in science to display and interpret data they had collected when testing the resistance of certain objects on different surfaces, or when children in Pelicans used a timer to time the number of minutes it took to bake their play dough cake in the oven.

- 3.10 Pupils' knowledge and skill in information and communication technology (ICT) is a real strength and is used expertly across many different disciplines. Pupils spoke confidently about the value it added to their learning and also talked about how it helped them to become more independent. They readily use handheld devices and research topics as seen in geography and history lessons. Additionally, pupils in Year 4 used ICT with skill in their design and technology (DT) lesson when designing packaging. During pupil discussions pupils shared their research and presentations on natural disasters, which they had prepared in an eye-catching way. They also spoke of how they enjoyed preparing presentations for younger pupils on subjects such as cyber-bullying. All boarders have access to ICT facilities in prep times and use it with confidence to help with their homework.
- 3.11 Pupils have excellent study skills that they build up effectively as they move through the school. All groups of pupils demonstrate strong analytical skills and the ability to use this information to draw reasoned conclusions which they confidently explain. For example, in a science lesson for older prep pupils, all positively made predictions on both the rate of dissolving and how much could be dissolved with different water temperatures. Pupils in Year 5 undertook an excellent dissection of the book, *Kaspar Prince of Cats* by Michael Morpurgo, drawing up a series of questions about the story based purely on an illustration. In the run up to examinations boarders felt they received helpful revision study techniques which enabled them to do well in assessments. In discussions, older pupils spoke confidently about how they develop their own study skills for revision but utilise a range of strategies that suits their own style of learning, whether this be through mind mapping or flashcards containing important information.
- 3.12 Pupils are very successful in their achievements both academically and beyond the curriculum as a result of a supportive teaching approach. Many are awarded scholarships and gain accolades in music, drama and sports. Boarders benefit directly from opportunities they receive whilst boarding to develop both academic and a wider variety of achievements. They talked to inspectors about how they could practise their musical instruments more easily. Boarding staff commented on how other boarders had taken up instruments having been inspired by others in the house. Pupil success covers a wide range of areas including rugby, cross-country and cricket in sport, membership of the county youth orchestra in music or high levels of achievement in a local drama festival.
- 3.13 Pupils are very eager to learn and take ownership for their learning. This is as a result of being encouraged by staff in a positive culture which is engendered by school leaders. Pupils are able to work independently as well as collaboratively. They understand that regardless of whom they are working with, even if they are not your closest friends, in order to achieve something, you need to work as a team. For example, in an outdoor learning lesson, the pupils understood the need to listen and be open-mined in order to successfully play team games. Pupils show persistence and determination, as exemplified when the youngest children showed tenacity and staying power when trying to staple two pieces of paper together. Pupils of all ages have a positive approach to their schooling, and this was shown by younger pre-prep pupils who came into registration and independently prepared themselves for the day needing little, if any, guidance from the teacher. In the boarding house, pupils' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning was witnessed as a group of male boarders decided not to go to their pizza evening early, even when encouraged to do so by the staff, so that they could first finish their homework.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 Pupils display high levels of self-confidence as shown in the way that they readily throw themselves into every aspect of school life, whether assisting in assemblies or showing visitors around the school during an open day. They engage with everyone in a confident manner because they feel that they are in a safe place within the school setting. As a result, pupils show excellent levels of resilience and determination. They self-assess confidently and always reflect on their work and have a strong sense

of their own capabilities. They consider making mistakes as part of their personal development. Both boarding staff and boarders talked about the resilience that the occasional homesick pupils showed when dealing with boarding for the first time. Older boarders talked positively about the preparation they had received, as a result of their boarding experience, and were looking forward to the new opportunities on offer in their senior schools. In the questionnaire about boarding, every parent who responded said that the boarding experience has supported their children's personal development.

- 3.16 Pupils are excellent decision makers. This is shown in many areas such as in the outdoor learning environment when they have to make wise decisions about how to transport a jewel across a contaminated bog area (tennis balls and half-pipes). Likewise, when debating in school council the pros and cons of responding to a request for biscuits instead of fruit at snack time. They finally decided that maintaining their five a day was too important to jeopardise. There is a positive culture in the school with all pupils understanding how important effective decision-making was on themselves as individuals. During informal conversations at break time and over lunch, pupils demonstrated a solid understanding that the decisions they made had an effect on their own success, with boarders talking about the importance of both cheering others up when they were feeling down, but also joining in with others to feel better themselves. They understand that negotiation and compromise are important elements in the decision making process.
- 3.17 Pupils' sense of spirituality is strong, whether this be through high levels of empathy when studying First World War poetry or the inner strength that is demonstrated when working in the beauty of the school landscape. In discussions, pupils spoke of how they revelled in the calmness when visiting mountain environments on school trips. They appreciate their natural environment and understand the positive impact that this has on their inner sense of wellbeing. In discussions, pupils thought that animals added to their sense of inner calm, talking about feeling at one with their pony on rides through the countryside and dog walking through beautiful landscapes. Pre-prep pupils spoke of how music made them feel good and how rewarding it was to help others. Boarders reported that they enjoyed not having their phones all the time, but could, instead enjoy the space they had in boarding time to run around and play. The school chapel services enable pupils to reflect on their own sense of belonging within a religious community. The beauty of the music and carefully chosen themes for sermons provide occasions for all present to reflect about life and ethical issues.
- 3.18 Pupils from the youngest children in the EYFS have the ability to reflect on their behaviours and will do all they can to 'get back on track' when their behaviour does not reach the highest levels expected. Pupils understand the importance of a code of conduct and will often question the attitudes of others when their behaviour does not fall within the understood parameters. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and confidently share their reasoning. Pupils will happily report misbehaviour, safe in the knowledge that it will be dealt with fairly. The boarders talked about how they appreciated the "Time Out" sanction, where they could sit quietly and reflect on their behaviour, giving them a chance to get it right without a formal punishment. In Reception, pupils talked confidently about the rocket chart which recognised good behaviour and lead to stars. They also understood how poor behaviour saw them move down the rocket chart onto the grumpy cloud which gave them a chance to think about their behaviour and improve it before getting time off. Pupils take much responsibility for their actions and are responsible and thoughtful towards others. They understand how the Golden Rules are followed until Year 4 and the Code of Conduct from Year 5 keeps their community purposeful and harmonious.
- 3.19 Pupils understand the importance of being strong social citizens. This is shown in the Year 8 charity day when they plan all the activities for the day and have to liaise with other parts of the school such as staff, groundsmen and caterers. Their levels of social collaboration are excellent at such times. Pupils from a very young age demonstrate a strong social awareness and the ability to work together to achieve more. This was shown in a pre-prep session in the outdoor learning environment where they showed excellent levels of collaboration to set up activities in the woodlands to share with their parents. In boarding, pupils spoke confidently about the importance of helping each other and how

this made the boarding house a better place, from small things such as helping with the laundry to more impactful matters such as looking after one another. In the questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents felt that the school helps their children to develop strong teamwork and social skills.

- 3.20 Pupils make excellent contributions to a cordial and happy school community. They appreciate that they all have a role to play in this whether it be through the school council or as major officials. Younger pupils spoke of the merits of being the pre-prep ambassador for the week and how keen the pupils in Year 3 were to collect the snack time milk for their classmates. Being selected to be a class representative on the pupil council is seen as a great achievement and one that they take seriously. They realise the importance of the responsibilities involved in making the school an even better place. House captains lead house matches with skill and compassion and the youngest children in the Nursery love their Pelican Pals from Year 7. Within the boarding community pupils take great pride to ensure that everyone, including those who board occasionally, are made to feel welcome. Pupils love supporting others and show care and compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. They do this through their endeavours in supporting a range of local and national charities. School leaders and managers ensure the school meets one of its aims to realise the importance of contributing to the community inside and beyond school.
- 3.21 The level of pupils' cultural understanding is excellent. They live alongside people from around the world in a seamless and harmonious way. Pupils are very understanding and mutually supportive, confident to discuss any aspect of inclusion and diversity because they respect one another. Pupils show a sense of care and compassion and an appreciation that every person has equal value in society. For example, older prep pupils were researching body art and had learned about an African tribe that used plates to stretch their mouths and ears to make them look more beautiful. Pupils talked openly about how they respected this view even if they did not see it as beautiful themselves. All pupils show a genuine respect for, and understanding of, the different cultures within the boarding house, stating that the rich mix of people from around the world was one of the most important aspects of being a boarder. School leaders are active promoters of equality and the celebration of individuality. The school is most successful in achieving its aims with regard to developing independent, searching minds in a tolerant and supportive environment.
- 3.22 Pupils understand that rules are in place for their own safety and they show an excellent awareness of keeping safe. They know how to stay safe on areas such as the adventure playground, where they expertly monitor their own behaviours. Pre-prep pupils talked with authority on the safety measures in place in the woodland areas, fully understanding the need for such measures. In the boarding house pupils spoke confidently and informatively about the importance of regular washing, particularly as they got older and this was supported by informative talks from the house staff. Pupils love sport and understand how this needs fuelling through a healthy diet. They know how to speak out if they do not feel safe which can be attributed to the positive relationships that exist within the school community. Older pupils talk with knowledge and reflection on what constitutes a healthy relationship. They know that sensible choices will lead to them having positive mental health and wellbeing.

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 chapel. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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

Mr Graham Gorton	Reporting inspector
Mrs Mary Sansom	Compliance team inspector (Compliance officer for group of schools)
Mr Chris Calvey	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Miss Dina Hamalis	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)