



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**FOCUSED COMPLIANCE AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION REPORTS**

**FOREST SCHOOL**

**NOVEMBER 2017**



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## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School College</b>	Forest School			
<b>DfE number</b>	320/6000			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	312677			
<b>Address</b>	Forest School College Place London E17 3PY			
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8520 1744			
<b>Email address</b>	info@forest.org.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Marcus Cliff Hodges			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr David Wilson			
<b>Age range</b>	11 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1091			
	<b>Boys</b>	557	<b>Girls</b>	534
	<b>Seniors</b>	813	<b>Sixth Form</b>	278
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14 to 16 November 2017			

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Forest School is an independent day school for pupils aged 4 to 18 years. It was founded in 1834 as an Anglican foundation and is administered by a board of governors known as the Governing Council. It was originally a boys' boarding school, becoming co-educational by 1981.
- 1.2 Since the last inspection, the school has brought together the separate boys' and girls' senior schools under the leadership of the Warden and of his senior leadership team, whilst keeping both academic and pastoral house organised by gender. A new library and digital information centre opened in 2013.
- 1.3 The school shares the same site as the associated preparatory school. Pupils in the senior school are taught in single sex classes and integrated for other activities, while sixth formers are taught in coeducational classes.

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

- 1.4 Forest School seeks to provide an outstanding, distinct all-round education and excellent academic teaching and pastoral care. It seeks to provide extensive opportunities outside the classroom for pupils to learn and develop. The school endeavours to treat each pupil as an individual to enable them to achieve the very best of which they are capable and prepare them for the world beyond School.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, and represent a diverse range of cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is well above average. The school has identified 69 pupils as having educational special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include specific learning difficulties and/or social difficulties; 43 of whom receive additional support from the school. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils have particular academic aptitudes; they are supported in departments and through the extra-curricular programme.

## 2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports 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. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was 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 report of which appears later in this document. The 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 regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; 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 full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2014 to 2016, performance has been well above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2014 and 2016 have been above the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 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, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their 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 variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include 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 those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and its results in public examinations, 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 well-being 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include 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 good.
- All groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress.
  - The quality of the pupils' achievements outside the classroom is excellent.
  - Pupils' attitudes towards learning are consistently positive and they collaborate particularly well.
  - Pupils demonstrate advanced study skills.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils are confident, articulate and resilient individuals.
  - Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with each other and strongly understand their responsibility to contribute to the community.
  - Pupils demonstrate a notably strong appreciation of diversity and cultural respect throughout the school.
  - Pupils make well-informed choices at key points throughout their school career.

## Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
- Ensure that all marking consistently provides pupils with guidance to enable them to improve their work further.
  - Ensure that teaching offers a greater consistency of challenge, thereby enabling all pupils to maintain high levels of progress.

## The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 Pupils achieve academically at a high level, meeting the school's aims and this is reflected in their public examination results. The following analysis uses the national data for 2014 to 2016. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been well above, and A-level results have been above the national average for maintained schools. Results in IGCSE examinations have been higher than world-wide norms. Academic results in 2017 for both GCSE and IGCSE remain strong, though there has been a small decline in overall performance at A-level. Pupils achieve places at a wide range of universities with highly demanding entry requirements. Almost all pupils achieve results at least in line with their ability, including those with SEND and EAL.
- 3.6 Standardised measures of progress indicate good progress is made to GCSE and A-level. This was observed in lessons and pupils' books. Pupils with SEND make similar progress to their peers, enabled by systematic identification of their needs, which are met through the careful planning of work and approaches to be used, which is informed by leaders' monitoring of the pupils' progress and effectively communicated to teachers. Pupils' good progress is also due to regular celebration of pupils' success through commendations for good work, acknowledgement of awards at assembly, around the school, on the school's intranet and in school publications. The best progress seen made by pupils arises as a result of the teacher's high expectations, clear explanations and focused direction, as seen in a lower school French lesson where pupils successfully made independent choices when using a range of media to aid revision. Almost all pupils when interviewed and in reply to the pre-inspection

questionnaires felt that they were given the opportunity to learn and make good progress, and an overwhelming majority of their parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed.

- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate very strong and secure knowledge and understanding across the range of subjects. This was seen, for example, in pupils' work about the playwright Thomas Brecht in Drama, social factors in economics and civil unrest in history. Younger pupils showed an excellent understanding of the use of mood in poetry, in identifying the use of pace to signify a horse galloping. Older pupils recalled very well how to test the various components of fitness within physical education, and, in an ancient Greek lesson, translated into English effectively, managing complex verb structures well. Pupils' subject knowledge arises from effective teaching, including the use of precise instruction, the use of skilful questioning and personal support by teachers. However, in some lessons and work seen, pupils were not able to demonstrate the same level of competence, because lessons lacked challenge and limited what they could do, or marking of work did not provide pupils with guidance to enable them to improve their work further. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they felt very well supported by teachers who are easy to communicate with, respond quickly when asked, and frequently arrange extra support outside of the timetable.
- 3.8 Speaking and listening skills are very well developed, and pupils excel in paired and group work, discussion and debate. Lessons enable pupils to enhance and apply their skills in speaking, listening and writing sustained pieces of text. For example, in an English lesson, older pupils confidently debated and discussed aspects of the *Odyssey*, while in a drama lesson, pupils confidently presented evidence in a 'trial' of key characters in *Macbeth*. The excellent relationships between pupils and staff contribute significantly to pupils' success, because pupils are encouraged to speak and feel their contributions are valued. For instance, younger pupils showed tangible enthusiasm when talking about chivalry in the story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. School prefects presented very articulately and confidently during an assembly on the links between emotional intelligence and reducing bullying.
- 3.9 Mathematical skills are well advanced and are applied accurately and highly successfully across the curriculum. In a chemistry lesson, older pupils showed excellent application of numerical skills in calculations involving compounds, whilst in economics, pupils showed very effective analysis of data to show trends in inflation using graphing functions on their calculators. They can readily apply these strengths across the curriculum because there is effective liaison between departmental and pastoral teams to ensure that opportunities to do so are carefully planned. Pupils willingly attend the mathematical clinics run outside of lessons, which help improve their numerical competency in allied subjects such as physics and chemistry and aid their involvement in national competitions such as the UK Maths Challenge.
- 3.10 Pupils are confident and competent users of information and communication technology (ICT), using it very well in lessons across the curriculum to solve problems, for researching when involved in independent study, in presentations, for personal organisation of homework and communication with teachers and fellow pupils. Younger pupils used mobile phones to capture microscopic images in the natural world, extending their understanding of patterns. In another lesson, pupils made excellent use of calculators when engaged with algebra and the use of double minus, whilst older pupils confidently used their own devices for interactive quizzes to aid learning in computing or to research enzyme action in biology. Pupils, including those with SEND, told the inspectors that they recognised that the use of technology is instrumental in increasing productivity and improving organisation, for example using their devices to record information and access online resources. Pupils actively choose to participate in technology-related activities, noteworthy being the popularity of the 'Girls that Code' club, and the strong contribution of older pupils to the teaching of programming in the preparatory school.
- 3.11 Pupils demonstrate advanced study skills, which are a result of the questions and tasks set by teachers that require pupils to apply their skills to research, engage with independent learning and take responsibility for their own study. GCSE pupils showed an excellent understanding of the common

themes within *To Kill a Mocking Bird* and *The Merchant of Venice* because their skills to analyse and summarise were developed to a very high level. Pupils with SEND demonstrate similar levels of achievement, because they are well supported through additional sessions with specialist teachers, for example on typing where handwriting is poor and using memory drills to improve short term knowledge retention. Pupils higher up the school are enabled to take more responsibility for their learning, as senior management have ensured that curriculum design for the older pupils includes further opportunities for independent research. Pupils also receive extension lessons in critical thinking, as part of the Forest Diploma, helping them to enhance their logic and problem-solving abilities, used for example in assessment tests for entry into medical schools. All pupils pursue first the Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) as part of their GCSE curriculum, and then the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in the sixth form, in which they make a personal choice of enquiry and planning. They use self-evaluation well, and are highly successful in meeting the additional challenge of these research-intensive endeavours, because teachers give feedback and individual help readily. Pupils' books do not always show the same level of perceptive and analytical comment by teachers; as a consequence, pupils' miss opportunities to improve their work.

- 3.12 The pupils' excellent achievements in a wide range of activities outside the classroom are supported by the outstanding range of opportunities provided by leadership, management and governance, and the generosity of time that both staff and pupils give to support them. Pupils enjoy conspicuous success across many areas to regional and national level, including literary and mathematical Olympiads, the performing arts, youth leadership, competitive sports, Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and outdoor education, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils achieve very highly in external music examinations, working up to diploma standard, and the best achievers gain selection for highly competitive drama centres and music ensembles nationally. Pupils are able to pursue excellence in their chosen fields outside of school, because leaders enable appropriate timetable adjustments when required, and teachers provide appropriate additional support. The overwhelming majority of pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that pupils could be involved in a good range of activities, confirmed in discussions with pupils during the inspection.
- 3.13 Pupils' attitudes towards learning are consistently positive. They show a willingness to work collaboratively with peers and teachers, and regularly take the lead in promoting new activities as well as supporting others as mentors. Younger pupils talked very enthusiastically about all the clubs they attend, and were eloquent in particular about their combustion experiments in science. Pupils organise their work methodically and neatly, and their positive attitude and willingness to wrestle with problems collaboratively enables them to be highly successful in both lessons and extracurricular activities, as seen in a sixth form further mathematics lesson and a CCF activity.

## The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 Pupils are confident, articulate, and show a determination to keep trying even when something is challenging. They are very aware of their strengths, exhibit good self-control and are highly motivated to succeed. When interviewed, pupils confirmed that this was because of the excellent relationships they have forged over time with their teachers, who know them well, carefully monitor their personal action-planning and guide them when required. Pupils' well-being and personal development prospers because the highly effective house system offers pupils every chance to participate in a wide range of activities and, in particular, to hone their leadership skills. In the questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their child's personal development.
- 3.16 Pupils of all ages understand the importance of successful choices, for their lifestyles, their studies as they move through the school, for their careers and university destinations beyond. Pupils interviewed considered that they were empowered to make their own decisions, particularly those involving careers, through the strong encouragement and expertise of staff and former pupils, an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils feel they can make a positive impact in their school community, through house activities, as mentors for other pupils needing support, and as form representatives, where recently they had been able to introduce recycling bins around the school. Older pupils explained how they were able to lead initiatives in many ways, for example, to promote mindfulness during assembly or introduce new musical activities such as the termly 'Live Lounge' event. Pupils also appreciated how the school had helped them develop strong research skills around topics of their own choosing, supporting well both the development of their evaluation skills and capacity to manage a busy schedule. The oldest identify and are successful in establishing their own work experience placements, a process well supported by their tutors. Most parents in their responses to the questionnaire felt that the school provided suitable advice about choices of subject and careers, and this was confirmed in discussions with pupils, and by a very large majority of pupils' questionnaire responses.
- 3.17 Pupils show an increasing awareness of spirituality as they progress through the school. This is due to the strong school values that are evident in assemblies, chapel services, discussions in lessons, project work and in displays around the school. Pupils from all backgrounds show an obvious willingness to reflect on non-material aspects of life. Pupils develop activities and displays to challenge the viewer to reflect beyond the material world. For example, middle school pupils took part in a lunchtime debate exploring religion as a force for good or evil, and discussed confidently issues around faith and spirituality. In interviews, pupils speak well of the opportunities they have to worship in different ways, of the provision of quiet places for reflection within the school, and of the opportunities to take part in a range of services and festivals of worship.
- 3.18 Pupils develop an excellent sense of right and wrong, reinforced by a strong pastoral system where they are given opportunities to gather pride in a sense of house identity and the values they represent. During a tutor period, younger pupils shared their similarities and differences using visual diagrams, whilst in assembly, pupils highlighted the issue of 'fake news', utilising the words of various American presidents. In subject lessons, pupils learn and explore that life brings moral dilemmas. In a Latin lesson, pupils were able to reflect with sensitivity about vanity falling victim to cunning in an Aesop's fable. Similarly, in a science lesson, older pupils were able to discuss stem cells and the ethics issues raised by their use.

- 3.19 Pupils are extremely friendly and welcoming, working well with their peers within a supportive learning environment. Pupils take the opportunity to collaborate and take initiative to promote better outcomes for themselves, as seen in a games lesson, where players independently prepared equipment for a football practice with great efficiency. In lessons seen across all ages, pupils cooperated well and were able to discuss choices even when in disagreement, for example, in a geography lesson when senior pupils debated the value of various farming and finance schemes. Pupils participate well when opportunities to work with each other arise in a social context, in for example house events. Whole school occasions such as the annual fireworks and school dance, are given valuable support by the Forest School Parents Association.
- 3.20 Most pupils are very aware of their responsibility to play a positive role in the school and wider community and willingly give of their time to run societies to help their peers or mentor younger pupils. For example, pupils successfully lead house competitions, run many societies and clubs, or write programme notes for school productions and prayers for Remembrance Sunday service. Many fund-raising initiatives arise directly from the pupils. Pupils often introduce new activities, liaise with charity shops, coach sport outside of school as part of their willingness to serve others. Many school events are entirely run by the pupils, including an annual multi-cultural celebratory event, involving pupils from Year 9 upwards, with proceeds also going to local charities. The school is a sponsor of the London Academy of Excellence, and pupils from both institutions come together regularly and benefit from a growth in common awareness from the collaborative opportunities that arise, through lectures and social activities, as well as enhanced opportunities for preparation for university.
- 3.21 Pupils demonstrate a notably strong appreciation of diversity and respect for different cultures. When interviewed, lower school pupils explained how the school assisted them to make new friends and how they felt that neither race nor gender were impediments to building positive relationships. The oldest pupils and teaching staff expressed great pride that the school prefect body fully reflected the diversity found in the school, and in excelling in their work, provided outstanding role models for younger children. In the questionnaires, most pupils and almost all parents agreed that the school encourages pupils to be tolerant of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 3.22 Pupils at the school know how to stay safe and healthy. They demonstrate a strong awareness that they need to be physically healthy and they understand that this means being active and also eating a balanced diet. Pupils are also aware of the importance of their emotional health and are able to describe ways in which they achieve this and ways in which the school supports them. Pupils are clear about how to keep themselves safe and recognise and guard against potential risks. In the pupil questionnaires, almost all pupils indicate they know how to stay safe online, and through interview confirm they are supported by the school in developing a keen awareness around the use of social media and new technologies, including limiting their use at night to permit a good sleep. In the sixth form, pupils appreciate the additional opportunities to deepen their awareness, for example about mindfulness, drugs and alcohol, safe driving and sexual health. Pupils of all ages feel they know who they can turn to if they need help, feel that staff support them very well, and speak highly of the additional professional independent counselling service that the school makes available.

## 4. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr James Wilding	Reporting inspector
Miss Sarah Arthur	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)
Mr Alan Bougeard	Team inspector (Assistant head, HMC school)
Mr Robert Chatburn	Team inspector (Head of department, Society of Heads school)
Mr Alan Cooper	Team inspector (Senior teacher, HMC school)
Mr Simon Mozley	Team inspector (Former deputy head, GSA school)
Mr William Norton	Team inspector (Head of department, HMC school)
Mr Paul Sanderson	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)