



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

## **Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**Russell House School**

**June 2019**



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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Russell House School			
<b>DfE number</b>	886/6039			
<b>Address</b>	Russell House School Station Road Otford Sevenoaks Kent TN14 5QU			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01959 522352			
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@russellhouse.kent.co.uk			
<b>Head</b>	Mr Craig McCarthy			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr Yvonne Lindsay			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	193			
	<b>Boys</b>	95	<b>Girls</b>	98
	<b>Pre-Prep</b>	66	<b>Main School</b>	127
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4 to 6 June 2019			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Russell House School is a proprietorial, non-selective preparatory school for boys and girls aged 2 to 11 years. It was established in 1938 in Kemsing and moved to its present site in Otford in 1947. The school is under the ownership of Russell House School Ltd. and is run by a board of directors, supported by an advisory board.
- 1.2 The school comprises: the Pre-Prep School for pupils aged 2 to 5 years and the Main School for pupils aged 5 to 11 years.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection, the indoor sports and drama facilities and the science centre have been refurbished and the pre-prep accommodation has been remodelled to provide access to the newly created, enclosed garden areas. The current head has been in post since 2012.

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

- 1.4 The school aims to provide an inspirational education in a happy family atmosphere. It strives to encourage each pupil to achieve beyond expectations and to be fully prepared for the next stage of education. It seeks to foster motivation, intellectual curiosity and self-confidence, balanced with consideration for others, enabling pupils to embrace life's diverse challenges.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.5 Pupils come from professional families, mostly of white British origin, living within a 10-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability profile of the school is above average. The school has identified 15 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and speech and language difficulties, all of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for two pupils, one of whom receives additional support. The school has identified a number of pupils as being among the most able in the school population and the curriculum is modified for them.

## 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. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. 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](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

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

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

- 2.2 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

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

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 **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**

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

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools.**

- 2.11 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.12 **The standard relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] is met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.13 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 any pupils 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, 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.

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

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.15 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.

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

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

2.17 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.

**2.18 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Russell Robins	Nursery
Nursery	Nursery
Transition	Nursery
F1	Reception
F2	Year 1
F3	Year 2
F4	Year 3
F5	Year 4
F6	Year 5
F7	Year 6

## Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils display an excellent work ethic in all activities.
  - Pupils' overall achievement is excellent because it is promoted by small classes, specialist teaching and generous levels of staffing.
  - Pupils of all abilities make strong progress from their starting points because rigorous tracking systems ensure that appropriate support is provided.
  - Pupils express themselves confidently.
  - Pupils work well together to solve problems and to achieve common goals.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent
- Pupils show outstanding loyalty and commitment to the school, their houses and their friends.
  - Pupils share their appreciation of the non-material aspects of life, displaying a mature spiritual awareness in all of their activities.
  - Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They exhibit a high level of self-discipline and a deep respect for the school rules.
  - Pupils are sincerely committed to improving the lives of others within the school and in the wider community.
  - Pupils feel happy and secure in school.

## Recommendation

- 3.3 In the light of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
- Strengthen EYFS children's ability to learn and apply their skills outdoors all through the year.

## The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 The school meets its aim of enabling each child to reach his or her full potential and to strive to achieve beyond expectations. This is because the school insists on the highest levels of aspiration, engagement and standards from pupils, parents and staff, supported by high staffing levels and specialist teaching. The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests, but the available evidence shows attainment to be above in relation to national age-related expectations. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make rapid progress from their starting points against the early learning goals with most children achieving the expected levels of development, and some exceeding age-related expectations in literacy, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. Older pupils, including those with SEND and/or EAL, maintain their excellent rate of progress, as reflected in results of externally standardised tests and in lessons observed during the inspection. This is because the highly effective system for tracking pupil progress and subsequent rigorous analysis by school leaders informs individual pupil's learning programmes. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress and develop skills for the future. The vast majority of pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they appreciate the help their teachers give them to learn and grow.

- 3.6 Pupils develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas of learning because of the broad curriculum and the wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits such as the development of logical thinking in chess club. The experiences of the youngest pupils are enriched because teachers incorporate pupils' ideas into their planning, for example, during a study of materials, pupils linked this to the importance of recycling and responded by setting up a second-hand shop and sharing their concerns in assembly. Children in the EYFS independently select and initiate their own activities and enjoy extending and applying their learning into their garden areas when given the opportunity to do so. Year 4 pupils accurately demonstrated their secure grasp and excellent recall of the use of speech marks stimulated by the use of cartoon strips for discussion with their talk partner. Pupils imaginatively apply their creative skills to interpret and develop their ideas in art lessons, for example designing collage picture of elephants based on their preliminary sketches. Younger pupils actively followed up their observations of minibeasts in their garden area by using hand lenses and picture keys to identify and record their finds. The youngest pupils move enthusiastically in time to music and follow the instructions in a song to correctly identify parts of the body. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects is suitable for their child and that the school helps their child develop skills for the future.
- 3.7 Pupils' communication skills are excellent. They express their opinions succinctly and confidently, always listening respectfully to the views of others, because they develop these skills from an early age, for example when sharing their news. The youngest children, including those with EAL, extend their vocabulary in role play situations, such as when serving their teacher at a tea party and talking to their friends in the home corner. Older children successfully demonstrated confident presentation skills to deliver their class assembly about Judaism, expressing their words clearly and effectively engaging their audience with their sensitive message and interesting range of words and music. Pupils display strong comprehension skills because the school is committed to ensure that pupils acquire the literacy skills needed to fully support their studies, such as verifying the authenticity of source materials in the preparation of an online encyclopaedia page about the history of the school. The effective linking of class texts to current learning enhances pupils' love of reading. For example, Nursery children designed and tested homes for their 'bog babies' following their enjoyment of a story and a visit to an environmental centre. From the youngest age, pupils demonstrate their skills in other languages, for example responding fluently to a discussion about sports and hobbies in the target language, supported by key word prompts. Pupils take pride in their written work, developing a fluent cursive script from the earliest age, supported by opportunities for emergent mark making and the development of appropriate fine motor skills.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate rapid progress and high levels of attainment in numeracy, frequently working at levels above their chronological age because of specialist teaching and focused class support to address pupil needs. Pupils successfully measure their achievements in numeracy lessons because effective plenary sessions enable them to judge their progress against the objectives of the lesson and because marking sets targets for further improvement. The youngest pupils consolidate basic mathematical ideas in their learning supported by relevant practical experiences, for example recognising and understanding the value of coins for use in the class shop. Older pupils effectively build on their understanding of 2D shapes to confidently interpret the properties of 3D figures from different perspectives. The pupils have had considerable success in national competitions, collecting a bronze and a silver medal in the National Primary Maths Challenge, because they apply their prior experience from interhouse events in school.

- 3.9 Pupils, including those with SEND, apply their information, communication and technology (ICT) skills competently to record their work and to support and enhance their learning, for example successfully utilising their independent research skills to find relevant facts about the children of Henry VIII. The youngest pupils designed attractive computer generated drawings. Reception pupils competently access appropriate programmes to support their learning and they develop their logical thinking skills by learning simple coding. Older pupils skilfully created spreadsheets to enter data and, in a geography lesson, were able to manipulate software to study the physical features of Kenya and compare and contrast them with the topography of the UK. The oldest pupils produced effective entries for an online encyclopaedia page about the school and worked collaboratively to design presentations about their recent visit to France.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate their extremely effective application of their study skills because they are encouraged to apply their critical thinking skills to evaluate the quality of their learning against lesson objectives and to formulate targets for improvement. For example, when studying probability, pupils were able to apply previous knowledge to analyse the key elements and select suitable strategies to obtain the correct solution. The youngest children are encouraged to find their own solutions to problem solving because teachers use open-ended questions to guide their enquiries, for example experimenting to safely free a minibeast by designing an escape route for him. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their children develop skills for the future and all pupils agreed that they are encouraged to think and learn for themselves.
- 3.11 Pupils display considerable success in competitions, matches because the school encourages them to participate in a wide range of activities and to celebrate their personal achievements in assemblies. Pupils gain the confidence to embrace and enjoy national competitive events as a result of their practice in school-based competitions. The science and maths quiz teams both reached the semi-finals of national competitions and the general knowledge quiz team reached the finals of their national competition. Many pupils are awarded top grades in external music, speech and drama examinations, with many gaining distinctions, because teachers work with them to present assemblies, drama productions and concerts and choir performances. Teams have qualified for national finals in gymnastics and have won major tournaments in football, netball and county tennis championships. Pupils achieve well in art, inspired by the dramatic displays of pupils' work around the school, and are successful in national art competitions. Pupils achieve high success in their applications for their future education, with many gaining places at their first choice of senior school. Scholarships have been awarded for academic achievement, art, music, sport and drama.
- 3.12 Pupils exhibit exemplary attitudes to learning. They are highly motivated to succeed because they are proud of their personal successes and inspired by their studies. Pupils expressed their love of the school and their enjoyment of lessons which they said are fun because they are 'more like an adventure'. Pupils work well together and recognise the benefits of teamwork in aiding them to learn from each other and strengthen their skills. Younger pupils initiate their own group activities, for example exploring the properties of foam and soap sparked an exciting experiment to mix the together. Pupils respond positively to praise and enjoy the tangible rewards for their hard work, for example high points. This is because they are very loyal to their house and are proud to contribute to its success.

## The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils exhibit mature levels of self-discipline and maintain very high personal standards of behaviour and good manners. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning because they know the school and their future teachers very well. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that their happy times at school give them the confidence to face new situations, such as their first overnight camping trip in the school grounds. The oldest children say they appreciate their leavers programme because it teaches them life skills such as self-defence to prepare them for the wider world. Pupils demonstrate resilience in adverse situations, such as persevering in match play in bad weather, because staff model their ability to appreciate the positive side of a situation, and because pupils are supported by strong friendships and teamwork. Pupils respond positively to guidance to improve their work and try hard to meet their targets because they appreciate the rewards gained for their house or personal recognition for their success. The vast majority of parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps pupils to be confident and independent.
- 3.15 Pupils develop the confidence to make their own decisions because teachers encourage them to do so from the earliest age. The youngest pupils confidently select activities independently and organise themselves, for example selecting an apron for water play. They are guided to make good choices in their relationships with their friends, learning to explain the reasons for their actions. During interviews, older pupils agreed that staff provide opportunities for them to make important decisions for themselves, for example preparing to make independent choices about their personal organisation such as handing in their homework on time. Elected pupil leaders take decisions on behalf of their houses and live up to their responsibility to decide on themes for assemblies and select teams for interhouse competitions. Pupils demonstrate a deep respect for the views of others, explaining that in debating everyone is entitled to their opinion and should be heard. They understand that voting can provide a decision which represents all viewpoints, for example younger pupils voted for the name of their class shop.
- 3.16 Pupils display a deep appreciation of their surroundings and have a mature awareness of the value and importance of the non-material aspects of life. This is because teachers encourage them to enjoy the beauty of the school grounds and provide quiet times for reflection and relaxation during the school day by listening to peaceful music and enjoying mindful colouring. Younger pupils joined in a sensitive discussion about the relative values of expensive items and personal treasures, supported in doing so by an inspiring introduction to the concept by their teachers. Pupils display their appreciation of the beliefs and values of others, seen when they meet visitors who discuss different viewpoints, such as Buddhist monks and others representing different faiths. In a thoughtful assembly presentation about Judaism, pupils shared a song about the values of family life, reflecting its importance to Jewish people and a presenting a message to be shared regardless of religion or beliefs. Pupils appreciate simple pleasures such as the excitement of searching for potatoes as they harvest their crop or enthusiastically joining in with the uplifting morning singing sessions to start the day. Older pupils explained how their creative writing helped them to express their ideas, for example effectively using new vocabulary to create tension in an adventure story.

- 3.17 Pupils exhibit a deep respect for school rules and for the school's behaviour codes. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school expects them to behave well and almost all agreed that they understand the consequences of poor behaviour. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they are proud to be awarded a *high point* but see the award of a *low point* as an effective deterrent which would let their house down. Younger pupils recognise triggers for unkind behaviour aided by picture prompts, employing appropriate language to express their ideas and adding to class rewards for making good choices. In the questionnaire, a very small minority of pupils and parents felt that the school did not deal effectively with bullying when it occurs. During interviews, pupils did not support this view and agreed that the school codes would resolve any concerns, supported by staff, and that there was always someone to ask for guidance if needed. They say that they learn to respect other viewpoints during discussion sessions and to decide on their own standpoint about, for example, ethical issues relating to the theme of euthanasia. The overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour.
- 3.18 Pupils work well together as staff guide them to learn to share and to respect other people's viewpoints. They realise that effective teamwork can lead to greater success, for example working together efficiently in a mathematics competition and in sports matches. Pupils display strong loyalty to their house, promoted by effective leadership from their house captains and show their competitive spirit in house events. Younger pupils are well supported by the buddy system and welcome guidance and friendship from older pupil leaders. Younger pupils are encouraged to make good choices and working together to gain class rewards. The vast majority of parents and most pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps pupils to develop strong teamwork and social skills.
- 3.19 Pupils are keen to contribute to the lives of others within the community and in the wider world. They appreciate the need to look after the environment and demonstrate this commitment by recycling materials. Older pupils willingly take on responsibilities to promote their awareness of the importance of helping others, for example, leading their houses in activities or helping and supporting younger pupils by reading with them. Pupils demonstrate their commitment to enriching the educational opportunities for less fortunate students, as seen by their support towards creating a school in Nepal. Pupils understand that small acts of kindness such as selecting an instrument for the teacher in a music lesson are valuable and helpful. The oldest pupils eagerly embrace their responsibilities for organising a fund raising project in their final term, choosing the charity and the theme for the event.
- 3.20 Pupils enjoy learning about the many cultures represented in the school and are keen to find out more about customs and festivals from around the world during special language days and by outside visits, such as that to a Sikh temple. In discussion sessions, pupils show a deep respect for the diversity of beliefs in society by listening to the views of others. They are encouraged to debate current issues, to challenge stereotypical attitudes and to form their own opinions, for example about the effectiveness of vaccination to limit the spread of diseases. Almost all pupils and most parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages pupils to respect and tolerate the views of other people.
- 3.21 Pupils understand the need to stay healthy and keep fit because they learn to make positive choices to follow a balanced diet and to take part in outdoor activities, for example taking their break outside in the fresh air. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they know how to follow the school's guidelines on how to stay safe online. Older pupils agreed that they feel well prepared for the future because of the comprehensive leavers' programme including learning first aid skills. Pupils feel safe in the school environment because clear physical boundaries are set for them. They are confident that they can always find help because the teachers know them very well and pupil leaders are there to support them.

## 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 assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Gillian Bilbo	Reporting inspector
Mrs Elizabeth Bell	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, IAPS school)
Mr Michael Connolly	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)