



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

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

**St Christopher School**

**October 2022**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	St Christopher School			
<b>DfE number</b>	919/6028			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	311062			
<b>Address</b>	St Christopher School Barrington Road Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3JZ			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 650850			
<b>Email address</b>	hello@stchris.co.uk			
<b>Head</b>	Ms Emma-Kate Henry			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Peter McMeekin			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	523			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	481	<b>Boarders</b>	42
	<b>EYFS</b>	23	<b>Juniors</b>	94
	<b>Seniors</b>	330	<b>Sixth Form</b>	76
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18 to 20 October 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 St Christopher is a co-educational day and boarding school. It was founded in 1915 by members of the Theosophical Educational Trust. Since 1928, the school has welcomed pupils of all faiths and none. The school is a charity, overseen by a board of governors. It comprises the junior school, including the Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, and the senior school, which includes the sixth form. Boarders live in a single, suitably segregated boarding house that is located centrally within the school grounds.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has moved boarding into one boarding house and has relocated its EYFS provision into the main junior school building. A new head was appointed in September 2020, and a new chair of governors in 2021.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to help pupils develop competence and resourcefulness, as well as a social conscience and moral courage. It aims to instil in pupils the capacity for friendship, along with a true zest for life. It seeks to value all pupils as individuals, and to encourage them to develop curiosity, judgement and kindness. It strives for pupils to become both self-disciplined and self-motivated individuals, who are independent learners and creative thinkers, with a commitment to service, informality, healthy living and self-government.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come largely from families with professional backgrounds in Hertfordshire and surrounding counties, including London. Boarders are from UK or overseas families. Nationally standardised tests indicate that pupils have a broad range of abilities. The school has identified 204 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including social, emotional and mental health needs. Of these, 134 pupils receive specialist help, and four have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 25 pupils, 6 of whom receive additional support for their English.

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

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

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

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

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the required 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 should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

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

- 2.2 In the junior school, 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 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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**

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 In most areas of safeguarding, arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are implemented with due regard to current statutory guidance. However, the school has failed to ensure that checks on prohibition from management have been carried out before appointment for all governors and staff with management responsibilities. These are not recorded as required on the single central register of appointments (SCR). All such deficiencies were remedied by the end of the

inspection, but they indicate that oversight of safeguarding arrangements by governors is not fully effective or comprehensive.

- 2.12 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9–16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 and NMS 3, 5–7, 9–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met, but those in paragraphs 7 [safeguarding], 8 [safeguarding of boarders] and NMS 8 are not met.**

### Action point 1

The school must ensure that all required recruitment checks, in particular those made against the list of those prohibited from management, where relevant, are completed before appointment or before work begins, and are suitably recorded [paragraphs 7(a) and (b); 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; and EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.12].

### Action point 2

Governors must ensure that their review of safeguarding is sufficiently comprehensive to cover all aspects of statutory guidance, in particular that relating to recruitment checks [paragraphs 7(a) and (b); 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; and EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].

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

- 2.13 The school makes appropriate checks required under Part 4 to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.14 A single central register of the required recruitment checks has not been kept as required. Although all required checks were carried out by the end of the inspection, the dates on which checks against the lists of those prohibited from teaching in schools, and of those prohibited from the management of schools had not been recorded on the SCR, as required prior to the inspection.
- 2.15 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school in paragraphs 19 and 20 and NMS 22 are met, but those in paragraphs 18 [suitability of staff] and 21 [single central register of appointments] and NMS 19 are not met.**

### Action point 3

The school must ensure that the dates on which checks of staff against the lists of those prohibited from teaching in schools, and of relevant staff and governors against the list of those prohibited from the management of schools, are completed are recorded on the SCR as required [paragraphs 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b) and 21(6); NMS 19.1 and, for the same reason, paragraph 18(2)(f); and EYFS 3.12].

## PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 4 and 7 are met.**

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

2.18 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.

**2.19 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

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

2.20 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.

**2.21 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**

2.22 There is clear leadership and management of, and training in the practice and development of boarding in the school.

2.23 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including in boarding, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. In particular, with regard to recruitment checks and maintenance of a suitable SCR. Not all required records are kept in boarding.

**2.24 The standards relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 and NMS 2 are not met.**

### **Action point 4**

**The proprietor must ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils, including through maintaining appropriate records of recruitment checks as required in appendix B of the NMS [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.8].**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

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

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

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

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Monte	Nursery
K Group	Reception
J Group	Year 1
H Group	Year 2
G Group	Year 3
F Group	Year 4
E Group	Year 5
D Group	Year 6
I Group	Year 7
II Group	Year 8
III Group	Year 9
IV Group	Year 10
V Group	Year 11
Lower VI	Year 12
Upper VI	Year 13

#### Key findings

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

- Pupils' attainment is good in relation to their starting points; they achieve examination results which are above national levels at GCSE and A level.
- Pupils are good communicators. They speak articulately, listen carefully to teachers and their classmates, and their participation in discussions is extremely mature.
- Pupils achieve highly in a range of sporting and artistic and creative competitions and activities.

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good: pupils settle to work quickly and work hard, displaying a lively interest and curiosity although they do not always take leadership of their own learning or review their work consistently.
- The progress of the most and least able pupils is limited when they are not given tasks which provide appropriate challenge.

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

- Pupils demonstrate an excellent respect for different lifestyles and cultures; they celebrate differences between people within a harmonious community.
- Pupils display excellent social development; they work and socialise together extremely well in lessons, co-curricular activities and in boarding.
- Pupils are keen to help others, both inside and outside the school, and they succeed in the many opportunities to carry out leadership roles with relish.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay physically and mentally healthy; they make wise decisions about diet, exercise and lifestyle choices.
- Pupils display good moral understanding and take responsibility for their own behaviour. They clearly distinguish right from wrong.

## Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Ensure that the most able and least able pupils in the school make rapid progress in all lessons, tackling tasks which are appropriately challenging.
- Ensure pupils develop their thinking and study skills, take leadership in directing their own learning, and consistently review their work, so they can achieve their full potential.

## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Pupils achieve good academic standards across the school. Most children in the EYFS meet the early learning goals by the time they move into Year 1. The school's own assessments show that pupils in the junior school make good progress, with many working above the level expected for their age. Over the past four years, pupils have achieved results in GCSE examinations which are well above national levels. In 2022 over four-tenths of GCSE results were at the highest levels 7 to 9, with over nine-tenths being at levels 4 to 9. The achievement of male pupils was somewhat below that of female pupils. At A level over the past four years, results have been in line with or higher than national levels. In 2022 almost half of pupils achieved the highest A\* or A grades, with over eight-tenths of pupils achieving at least a grade C. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The large majority of applicants achieve admission to the university of their choice, often to highly competitive institutions. Data provided by the school show that pupils with SEND generally achieve well. This is because the school effectively identifies any pupils with learning difficulties and it supports them well. The overwhelming majority of parents expressed satisfaction with the progress their child is making, and all parents of boarders who responded to the questionnaire feel the boarding experience has helped their child's progress. Inspection evidence supports these views.

3.6 Pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well across all areas of learning. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, the very large majority of pupils agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons, and that teachers know how to help them learn. In a GCSE physics lesson, for example, pupils rapidly developed their understanding of Hooke's law because they easily recalled

and applied what they already knew on the subject. Pupils develop early reading skills effectively. In a reading lesson, pupils in Year 3 could understand a variety of written texts, and answer questions on them, because teachers matched the books they were reading closely to their level of reading ability. Inspection evidence shows that in some lessons, however, pupils make less progress than they are capable of because teachers do not match the work provided closely enough to individual pupils' levels of ability. In particular, those pupils identified as more able or less able. Boarders told inspectors their musical skills improve rapidly because they have extensive access to the school's musical facilities in boarding time.

- 3.7 Pupils are confident and articulate public speakers, and effective listeners. This is because they are encouraged to talk about their learning in class, and their opinions are listened to respectfully by teachers and classmates. Children in the EYFS are happy to talk with visitors about their learning. Pupils in Year 5 developed excellent communication skills in their project on a famous scientist, using information and communication technology (ICT) to create their presentation, then being filmed so they could assess the quality of their work. In a French lesson, pupils in Year 7 showed a confidence and willingness to speak the language when a soft toy was thrown to them, with an invitation to speak in French to the toy. Pupils' writing skills develop well across the school. In an English lesson in Key Stage 2, for example, pupils made good progress in writing by producing a set of instructions on how to make a cup of tea. Most pupils learn to write with accuracy and precision. This is evident in pupils' written work across a range of subjects. It was also demonstrated, for example, in a GCSE English lesson in which pupils were able to structure paragraphs effectively in response to questions about characters in the novel *Of Mice and Men*.
- 3.8 Pupils develop good mathematical and numerical skills. These are established effectively in the junior school. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 3, pupils made good progress in understanding place value to work out if certain numbers were bigger or smaller than others. Pupils in Year 5 used their numeracy skills well to understand the importance of financial planning in designing a moon-based theme park. Pupils' assuredness in mathematics grows rapidly. Year 9 pupils, for instance, showed skill and confidence in dealing with numerical problems in a foundation level GCSE mathematics paper. Pupils use their numeracy skills to good advantage in other subjects because numerical concepts needed in other areas are first covered in mathematics lessons if possible. Pupils in a sixth-form economics lesson, for example, used their mathematical skills effectively to calculate price elasticity of demand and used straight-line graphs to show the relationship between price and quantity.
- 3.9 The majority of pupils develop good study skills. In the junior school, pupils learn to work independently, particularly when they are set tasks which closely match their level of ability. This was seen to work to particular effect in a registration session for pupils in Year 1. The pupils worked independently on handwriting tasks with success because teachers had placed support materials around the room. Pupils can think at a high level for their age. In GCSE Geography, pupils analysed a complex situation successfully, evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of two different models of development in an emerging economy, with reference to supporting evidence and their own prior knowledge. Pupils told inspectors that in some subjects they have to think hard, and have the opportunity to work independently, but that this does not happen in all subjects. Inspection evidence supports this view. The very large majority of boarders agreed in questionnaires that they get help with their academic work if they need it during boarding time. Most pupils respond well to the school's expectation that pupils will take responsibility for organising their work in a way that will help them to revise effectively for public examinations.
- 3.10 Pupils achieve well in a variety of academic, sporting and cultural activities within and beyond the school. In robotics, for example, pupils from the school compete in regional competitions and in 2019 won a UK national competition. Pupils have achieved success in the UK Maths Challenge and take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, achieving bronze and silver awards. Pupils achieve highly in a range of sporting events, including netball and cricket. Individual pupils have competed at

regional, national or international level in eventing, dance, tennis, judo, karting and swimming. Pupils take part in drama productions in local drama festivals, and pupils have been selected for national youth theatre groups. The school's jazz band regularly performs at the local music festival. In art, older pupils have had their work selected for exhibition in a nationally prestigious art academy.

- 3.11 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Almost all pupils respond positively to the school's ethos which encourages them to become independent in their learning. They settle to work quickly, and work hard. They listen carefully to teachers and each other, often displaying a lively interest and curiosity. When given the opportunity, pupils work very effectively in collaboration with each other. This starts early in the school. Pupils in a music lesson in Year 1, for example, were keen to help each other playing the xylophone. Pupils in a GCSE English lesson showed excellent attitudes to learning in analysing Simon Armitage's poem *Remains*. They reflected, debated and drew on a range of contextual ideas, quoting from memory from the poem to justify their views. Pupils in a sixth form mathematics lesson made excellent progress in a challenging exercise on matrix manipulation and linear transformations because they were allowed to find their own way through the difficulties inherent in the topic, with the teacher offering only hints and prompts. Opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and to work independently are more evident in some subjects than in others, which limits the extent to which all pupils can take the lead in their own learning.
- 3.12 Pupils have good ICT skills. They are taught the skills they will need in the classroom and in everyday life. Pupils in Year 7 told inspectors about their experience of coding in a computer programming language to create a quiz. They said that their ICT skills improved during the Covid-19 lockdown because much of their learning took place remotely. Some subject departments use ICT well to enhance pupils' learning. In a GCSE English lesson for example, pupils used ICT effectively to collaborate in producing a shared document in response to a set text. In some subjects, pupils' use of ICT is more limited to word processing and carrying out internet-based research. Individual pupils use ICT to a high level. In a sixth form biology lesson, for example, excellent use was made of a laptop computer to capture pictures of the dissection of a pig's kidney, which were then annotated using a digital pen.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are self-confident and exhibit high levels of self-esteem. In questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils develop these qualities successfully. Pupils understand the importance of learning from mistakes. This was seen in many lessons across the school, where pupils see mistakes not as failures, but as opportunities to improve. Pupils have an excellent understanding of themselves, although they understand their personal strengths and weaknesses more clearly than those relating to their academic work. In the senior school, some pupils are not clear about their potential in some subjects, or how they might improve their work, because the marking in some pupils' books lacks detail. Most pupils show considerable self-discipline in their approach to their studies. They are keen to exploit the many opportunities provided by the school for them and they learn traits such as resilience from doing so. For example, in a kick boxing session in the junior school, pupils told inspectors that it was hard work, but that they have learned that it is important to keep going. Pupils welcome visitors and are proud to show off their school. Pupils told inspectors that the guidance the school now provides for them means that they feel well prepared for the next stage of their education, with many older pupils planning to go to university. The experience of boarding enables pupils to demonstrate significant levels of independence and self-reliance. This includes the experiences of taking responsibility for their work and meeting deadlines and more mundane matters such as organising their own laundry. They develop resilience through learning to live within a small community.

- 3.15 Pupils develop extremely good decision-making skills. These are apparent in a number of areas of school life. The youngest pupils choose their own tasks and activities successfully in the EYFS. Pupils are encouraged to consider the consequences of their choices. For example, in an English lesson, pupils in Year 2 considered the story of *The Wind in the Willows* and reflected fruitfully on a board game that rewarded and supported good moral choices. Pupils make good use of the school's extensive programme of non-academic activities which provide opportunities to make decisions about how they spend their time. These include co-curricular activities, optional activities on Thursday afternoons to choose from, and community service volunteering in the sixth form. Pupils in the junior school art club told inspectors that they chose this activity because it helps them to become more creative. The boarding experience provides boarders with a wider range of decisions to make for themselves. There is no uniform worn at the school: pupils choose for themselves the appropriate clothes to wear, and they do so in a sensible way. When pupils can exercise choice in their learning, the vast majority of pupils make wise decisions. For example, in a French lesson, pupils in Year 6 chose appropriately which writing task to complete, because the teacher balanced freedom of choice with high expectations.
- 3.16 Pupils are thoughtful and reflective young people who are fully capable of considering big issues and questions. Although some, especially younger pupils, might not recognise the term 'spirituality', pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities they have to appreciate the non-material aspects of life. In a registration period, pupils in Year 1 reflected thoughtfully on what the phrase 'the end of the world' might mean. Pupils appreciate the several periods of silence that punctuate the school day, at the start of school meetings, morning talks or at the start of meals. Even the youngest pupils appreciate this: children in Nursery told inspectors that they enjoyed the time these silences give them to think. Some pupils find it harder than others to articulate their reflections on spirituality, or their thoughts on religious or philosophical issues.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate an excellent appreciation of right and wrong and accept responsibility for their actions. This is not through required obedience to a strict set of rules that is imposed on them: pupils would consider this to be not in line with the school's ethos. Pupils value the freedoms they enjoy, and the very large majority of pupils respond appropriately to them. Pupils told inspectors that they acknowledge when they get things wrong and also that they would challenge any inappropriate behaviour. They consider that disrupting a class would be like disappointing a friend, and that teachers trust them to behave, while they trust teachers to be fair. In questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of pupils said that the school expects them to behave well. This expectation was seen to operate effectively: pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent. In a cookery lesson, for example, Year 9 pupils fully respected the rules of the work area. They worked safely and sensibly, and tidied up after themselves, leaving the area clean and tidy.
- 3.18 In those subjects and lessons where pupils are encouraged to work together, pupils co-operate with each other extremely well, and develop excellent teamworking skills. This was seen, for example, in a music lesson in which Year 8 pupils collaborated well in composing a short musical piece in ternary form, sharing ideas readily, despite their varied levels of musical accomplishment. In lessons pupils routinely team up to solve problems. In a sixth form computer science lesson, for example, although there were more than enough computers to have once machine each, pupils chose to work in pairs so they could share ideas, in order to work more effectively in arriving at a solution. Pupils are keen to help each other learn, and they are pleased with the success of others. These skills are developed beyond the classroom, with many examples of older pupils guiding younger ones in house activities and co-curricular learning. In a Year 8 co-curricular robotics session, for example, pupils demonstrated excellent collaborative problem-solving skills, engaging enthusiastically with the challenges they faced. In questionnaires, the very large majority of parents agreed that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.19 Pupils told inspectors that the use of forenames for teachers and pupils helps to support a relaxed but strong sense of community in the school. Pupils appreciate and develop successfully through the many

opportunities they have to contribute to others in the school and the wider community. The options programme on Thursday afternoon enables older pupils to work alongside, and act as role models for, pupils from younger year groups. Older pupils told inspectors that they enjoy the chance this gives them to show leadership, alongside other opportunities in house events, clubs, in the school council and in sports activities. Pupils' personal development is enhanced through these experiences. Involvement in the local community is strong, especially for older pupils. They told inspectors of the value they gain from volunteering in different ways: helping in a care home, litter picking, involvement with a local food bank, supporting local charities and lobbying the local council to improve facilities for young people in local outdoor spaces.

- 3.20 Pupils demonstrate an excellent respect for different lifestyles and cultures. Pupils gain in their understanding of diversity from experiencing a harmonious community in which differences between people are accepted and celebrated. They develop respect for each other because this concept is deeply embedded in culture of the school from an early age. Children in Reception were able to speak with respect about the differences between themselves and their peers. In a mathematics lesson, Year 1 pupils understood that they were being set different work based on their ability, not on their differences. The school celebrates festivals of many religions and encourages those from different cultures to share their experiences and world view. This is particularly true of the boarding community, whose varied cultural backgrounds are celebrated. Boarders told inspectors that, as a consequence, they have a deeper understanding of issues relating to respect and tolerance. Almost all parents in questionnaires agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay physically and mentally healthy. They make good choices in respect of diet, exercise and lifestyle choices. This was seen, for example in Reception, where children were able to explain the value of healthy eating and the effect that sugar and fat could have on their body. In a food technology lesson, Year 10 pupils showed an excellent and sophisticated understanding of what constitutes a balanced and nutritious diet. They identified the health risks associated with, for example, fat and salt. Pupils know where and how to seek help for their mental health should it be needed, including from medical and counselling staff. Boarders confirmed that the school is a relaxed place where people get on well, but if they need to talk, they benefit from support from the many staff available with whom they can chat. The very large majority of parents in questionnaires agreed that the school encourages their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The overwhelming majority of pupils in questionnaires said that they understand how to stay safe online, because they have been taught about this in personal, social and health education and ICT lessons. Overall, pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe in the school.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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 Michael Phipps	Reporting inspector
Mr Chris Carlier	Compliance team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Bill Chadwick	Team inspector (Former deputy headteacher, HMC school)
Mr Christopher Hammond	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Jeremy Hallows	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy headteacher, HMC school)