

Exceptional Breadth | Individual Focus

Candidate Information Pack | Head





Welcome

Thank you for interest in the post of Head at Cokethorpe School, which becomes available in September 2025 following the announced retirement of our Headmaster, Damian Ettinger, who has led the School with character and great distinction since 2002. In his tenure, Damian has delivered significant changes to the School, by way of its physical environment through capital projects, its philosophy with the introduction of the Leadership Programme and our adherence to liberal educational principles, its structure following the addition of the Pre-Prep in 2007, its appeal through the refreshing of our brand, and its reputation courtesy of a rigorous focus on academic standards and the expansion of our broad and laudable Co-Curricular offering.

We are a school with a restless nature and a growth mindset. We have undertaken many positive changes in the last two decades under the guidance of dynamic leadership deployed with passion, vision and care in equal measure. We begin our search for a new Head at an exciting juncture for the School, providing opportunity and challenge for the right candidate to make a meaningful mark on our next chapter.

The sector faces considerable political and economic changes to its landscape. At Cokethorpe, we continue to plan purposefully for the future with ambitions to further develop the School site, thanks to sound financial management over many years and the philanthropic support generated by an active and recently established Development Office.

Among Governors, you will find a wealth of experienced leaders with myriad expertise honed in a variety of sectors, sharing an enthusiasm for and commitment to Cokethorpe and its ambitions. We seek to appoint an individual with a sound strategic mind, and the vision, wisdom, enthusiasm, drive, pragmatism, charisma, and resilience to build on our established, strong foundations, navigate the immediate winds and lead the School into the bright future we intend to deliver.

If this is a role and an opportunity which appeals, and you feel you have the experience, skills and mettle to meet and exceed our expectations, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Mr John Bennett
Chair of Governors

History and Overview

Founded in 1957 by Dr Francis Brown, Cokethorpe is an HMC and IAPS, independent day school providing a liberal education to circa 600 boys and girls from the age of four to eighteen. The School became co-educational in 1992, adding the 'Junior Department' - which later became the Prep School - in 1994, and ceased boarding in 2003, completing the transition to the Cokethorpe of today.

Situated in 150-acres of beautiful parkland just ten miles outside Oxford and two miles south of Witney, the School has a strong reputation for providing a rigorous, broad curriculum underpinned by a firm belief in the principles of a liberal education, and a knowledge that all pupils have the capacity for excellence if encouraged to be ambitious and take responsibility for their learning.

Cokethorpe expects a lot from its pupils, but they are supported to achieve those levels and inspired to reach beyond. They are provided with an exceptional breadth of opportunity, whether in the array of subjects or academic enrichment activities, or the wealth of AOB (our Clubs, Societies and Activities programme) options they can benefit from, challenge themselves through, and find enjoyment in. They are supported across this breadth with a truly individual focus. Small class sizes allow for a tailored educational experience to best support each pupil's learning. This is reinforced and furthered by the strong tutoring system, which provides academic and pastoral support to pupils each day.

The School is proud that its admissions process credits pupils who show a wide range of skills, leading to a dynamic and diverse learning environment. Students leave Cokethorpe to study at a range of different institutions, including Oxbridge, Russell Group, and other equally reputable institutions. Results at GCSE and A Level are very positive, with a strong emphasis on the value that is added to pupils through excellent teaching and learning.





The Role

The Head will need to be creative and have the strategic ability to deliver an ambitious and innovative vision for Cokethorpe which navigates challenges skilfully and exploits the opportunities for continuous development and improvement.

Reporting to the Governors, the Head prioritises effective implementation of shared strategic objectives and major operational matters. It is anticipated that through such open channels of communication, the Head will quickly cultivate a particularly close understanding with the Governors, and especially the Chair, establishing mutual confidence.

The Head is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the School across the 4-18 age range, ensuring the pupils receive a broad and individually focussed liberal educational experience promoting academic excellence and the delivery of a wide range of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to every pupil. The Head's accountability extends to ensuring that safeguarding is paramount, and that outstanding pastoral care provides a nurturing environment enabling pupils to develop their strengths and confidence.

Forward thinking, anticipating pupils' needs beyond Cokethorpe by creating a community for life, the Head will prepare pupils for their future as global citizens and promote leadership opportunities built on the pillars of integrity, courage, empathy, judgement, ambition and responsibility.

The Head must be a natural networker with the inter-personal skills to act as a compelling ambassador for Cokethorpe in a range of internal and external settings and to articulate what differentiates Cokethorpe from its competitors. The Head leads on marketing, recruitment and retention and keeps a relentless focus on pupil numbers. Strong commercial instincts will also be essential to develop the "business" side of the School and in seeking alternative sources of income.

The Head leads and line manages the Senior Management Team, currently comprising the Deputy Head, the Bursar, the Director of Studies, the Director of Co-Curricular, the Head of Sixth Form, the Director of Professional Development and the Head of the Prep School. The Head also acts as a role model to all members of the school community and will exhibit well-developed personnel management qualities which will maintain their confidence whilst managing change.

More specifically, the successful candidate will have the skills and experience to deliver in the following areas:

Strategic Leadership

- Work with the Governors and the Senior Management Team to develop and communicate a vision consistent with Cokethorpe School's aims and ethos to the staff, parents, pupils and the wider community.
- Translate the vision into coherent, achievable plans to appropriate timescales.
- Recognise the national and international economic and political challenges and deploy commercial acumen to the business aspects of the School, seeking opportunities for the School to grow and enhance its revenue.
- Understand the importance of the Cokethorpe Fund and the Development Office and contribute to the strategic planning required to secure further donations for bursaries and capital projects.
- With the Head of Prep, continue to develop and articulate a vision for a seamless education through the School for pupils from aged 4 to 18 years.
- Lead on the marketing and admissions strategy to recruit and retain pupils by clearly articulating Cokethorpe School's distinctive offer and its delivery against the local maintained and independent school competition.





School Management

- Secure the confidence and loyalty of all stakeholders by providing strong, dynamic, thoughtful, and accessible leadership to the whole community, whilst managing change successfully.
- Have a comprehensive understanding of budgets, financial controls and parameters. With the Bursar, ensure effective strategies, policies and practices are in place to manage the financial, human and physical resources of the School to successfully deliver the School's vision.
- Promote equality, diversity, and inclusion across the school community.
- Take overall responsibility for the delivery of excellent pastoral care for all pupils in line with safeguarding legislation, including safer recruitment, and working alongside external agencies as appropriate.
- Recruit and lead well-qualified teaching and professional support staff, deploying them skilfully, maintaining their morale and showing commitment to their wellbeing.
- In partnership with the Bursar, ensure all administrative, estates, catering and domestic teams are deployed and operate efficiently and effectively.
- Maintain effective strategies and practices for staff induction, professional development, performance review and leadership experience.
- Create and develop cohesive and proactive senior management, educational, and pastoral teams, ensuring that their roles and responsibilities are clear and that the highest standards of performance are set and maintained.
- Ensure compliance with all aspects of the legal framework of education policy, Health and Safety guidance, Child Protection and Safeguarding regulations, the Independent School's Standards (ISSRs) and all other statutory regulation applicable to the School.
- Oversee the School's readiness for inspection by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate.
- Ensure appropriate crisis management plans are in place.
- Actively embrace lifelong learning and opportunities to enhance the Head's own professional growth and development.

Academic Leadership

- Foster a learning environment which is engaging and ambitious in its breadth and individual focus, and which promotes the love of learning and the pursuit of academic excellence.
- Provide clear academic guidance, ensuring pupils of all abilities and all ages benefit from inspirational teaching underpinned by challenge and support.
- Deploy additional specialist support for pupils with SEND, EHCPs and/or in need of EAL.
- Develop and monitor a broad and appropriately balanced liberal curriculum, informed by clear educational philosophy and best practice, which enthuses enquiring minds, promotes the acquisition of lifelong skills, and leads to enrichment opportunities.
- Oversee innovative and effective curriculum planning across the Senior and Prep School with appropriate allocation of resources and sharing of good practice.
- Evolve and model creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning.
- Harness the potential for ICT and AI to enable innovative and effective approaches to learning and teaching.
- Ensure pupils across the whole ability and age range are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, including research and analysis, to fulfil their potential and develop appropriate levels of independence and confidence.
- Establish and maintain a consistent focus on pupil progress and achievement using an effective assessment framework, data recording, benchmarks and feedback to monitor progress in each pupil's learning.
- Sustaining and enhancing the School's academic achievements in public examinations and providing high quality advice and encouragement for pupils' higher education and future careers.
- Create a seamless educational experience for pupils as they transfer across phases.
- Ensure parents are fully informed about their child's academic progress and development.





Co-Curricular Leadership

- Support, further develop and maintain enthusiasm for an exciting programme of co-curricular activities, ensuring variety and quality of provision for all age groups.
- Promote enrichment experiences which enhance the core curriculum including, but not limited to sport, drama, music, clubs and societies, cultural events, competitions, visits to local places of interest, day trips, visits overseas and residential.
- Recognise and celebrate the efforts and achievements of individuals, teams, and groups, including those involved in activities out of school.
- Ensure pupils have opportunities to hold positions of leadership and responsibility within their class, year group and House, and are valued for their contribution to the Cokethorpe School community.
- As Head, maintain a regular, visible and enthusiastic presence in support of pupils' activities across the full range of the co-curriculum.

Pastoral Leadership

- Uphold the highest standards of pastoral care by building on Cokethorpe School's nurturing environment and by ensuring that pupil safety, happiness, wellbeing, and development inform all decision making.
- Prioritise safeguarding and the welfare of pupils, ensuring all staff have appropriate training and knowledge of statutory guidance and are fully aware of their responsibility to refer concerns.
- Create a culture of encouragement, inclusiveness and respect for others, both within and beyond the school community, ensuring pastoral structures such as the House system operate effectively.
- Challenge and encourage colleagues in their pastoral roles and ensure training is provided to further develop their understanding and effectiveness.
- Set high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour, enabling them to thrive across all aspects of school life.
- Promote the physical, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural well-being of pupils as a priority within the community and work collaboratively with relevant agencies where appropriate.
- Strengthen awareness of pastoral issues, including RSE and online safety, by overseeing the effective planning and delivery of an age-related PSHE curriculum and the provision of special opportunities to educate pupils in these areas.
- Maintain effective partnerships with parents, keeping them fully informed about their child's personal development and emotional wellbeing.
- Create a community for life by developing inter-connections between pupils, parents, and alumni.





Communications and External Relations

- Establish a presence within the catchment area, promoting Cokethorpe School in the local community and communicating key messaging confidently and compellingly.
- Ensure that the School's long tradition of sharing facilities, outreach, charitable work and partnership, and in particular the Corinthian Partnership, is continued and strengthened.
- Develop and maintain good relationships with local nurseries, feeder schools and leavers' destinations.
- Build strong relationships with the parents, carers and other stakeholders, in both the Prep and Senior Schools and maintain excellent communication with the parent body at all times.
- Work with the Development Office, supporting and encouraging their initiatives and efforts.
- Attend events and occasions across the whole School and in the local community, acting as a role model, recognising and appreciating the pupils and the staff's efforts and supporting their endeavours.
- Address issues raised by pupils, parents, staff, and others, responding proactively to concerns and complaints with sensitivity and in line with appropriate policies.
- Establish close ties with other constituents, the Cokethorpe Society and the Parents' and Friends' Association for example, and actively support their activities.
- Engage with professional associations, external agencies, and other appropriate bodies.

The Person

Qualifications and Experience

- Honours graduate with an extensive understanding of the independent schools' sector and preferably post-graduate leadership or management qualifications.
- Strong academic and intellectual credentials and a good track record of broad involvement in life outside the classroom.
- Evidence of regular and relevant professional development.
- Demonstrable success in a leadership role in a comparable school environment and through significant periods of change and development.
- Evidence of exceptional, collaborative and empathetic leadership skills and experience of comprehensive staff management processes, e.g. recruitment, development, retention and performance management.
- Strong financial understanding and broad commercial skills. Experience of aspects of the 'business' of a school including marketing, pupil recruitment, additional sources of income and fundraising.
- A proven track record in raising standards through, for example, using target setting, data analysis and curriculum innovation. A desire to drive improvements in teaching and learning including the use of technology.
- In depth understanding of all the phases in 4-18 education and the key education issues and developments, from primary through to higher education.





Professional Skills

- Ability to lead, inspire, challenge, motivate and empower teams and individuals to achieve goals that are centred on the processes to achieve the best possible pupil outcomes.
- Proven skills in developing, communicating, and successfully implementing and monitoring strategic plans in support of the aims, mission and values of a school.
- Broad commercial and business acumen; skilful management of financial and marketing objectives and an involvement with income generation and fundraising.
- Collaborative and consults others when identifying and implementing change and innovation; evaluates impact and sees things through.
- Strong leadership and management skills: committed and able to manage in a transparent and open manner and operate with integrity, courage, and empathy.
- Ability to address difficult issues and take difficult decisions, conveying outcomes clearly and sensitively to staff, parents, pupils, and other stakeholders.
- Ability to delegate effectively and devolve responsibility to appropriate staff.
- Significant experience of building and sustaining effective relationships with staff, pupils, parents, and other stakeholders.
- Empathy and skills to run an inclusive and diverse school community, valuing and promoting inclusion.
- A thorough understanding of a Head's responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and Child Protection issues and a clear commitment to delivering best practice in safeguarding.
- Thorough and up-to-date knowledge of, and ability to manage, risk and regulatory issues including inspection, legal compliance and health and safety.
- Strong organisational skills and the ability to prioritise and work effectively under pressure and to tight deadlines.
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to present effectively to a range of audiences across different and wide-ranging groups.

Personal Qualities

- Inspirational, engaging, and dynamic leader capable of a collaborative approach, building trust, confidence and developing team spirit.
- Gravitas and presence.
- Emotionally intelligent and self-aware; committed to continuously developing self.
- Stamina and resilience.
- Approachable, adaptable, open minded and with an eye to the future.
- An ambassador and professional advocate for the School with strong personal credibility.
- A willingness to teach.
- Ability to listen, display empathy and to maintain appropriate and supportive relationships with staff, pupils, and parents.
- Positive attitude to use of authority and maintaining very good standards of behaviour.
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team.
- Excellent judgement, integrity, independent thought, and sense of fairness.
- Commitment to participation in the extracurricular life of the School, including outside of standard working hours.





Employment Terms and Conditions

A formal contract detailing agreed terms and conditions will be drawn up on appointment.

A competitive salary (first review effective 1st January 2027 and thereafter annually) will be offered commensurate with the status and responsibilities of the role, and supported by a remuneration package to include:

- APTIS Defined Contribution Pension Scheme.
- Private medical insurance for the Head and his/her family.
- A staff fee remission scheme.
- A relocation package.
- The Head is entitled to take holidays during the normal school holidays except where his/her presence is required for proper execution of his/her duties as Head.
- The Head's appointment will be subject to two academic terms' notice.

The appointment will also of course be subject to all the usual vetting and barring checks including:

- Three references, including one from your current employer and one from your previous employer.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- Prohibition from teaching and management (Teacher Regulation Agency – TRA) and Disqualification from Childcare.
- Identity, Right to Work in UK and qualifications.
- Medical fitness to carry out the duties of the post of Head.
- An online social media/internet check.

Application Process

RSAcademics is assisting Cokethorpe School in the search and selection for this post. Prospective candidates should not contact the School in the first instance. Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics to arrange a confidential discussion with one of the consultants handling this appointment:

Camilla Oulton, Search Consultant camillaoulton@rsacademics.com

Peter Bodkin, Senior Advisor peterbodkin@rsacademics.com

The deadline for receipt of applications is **10.00am on Wednesday 4 December 2024**.

Applications should be made electronically to RSAcademics. To submit your application, please upload your documents according to the instructions on the RSAcademics' website. You should submit the following (both in PDF format):

A completed application form (available alongside this candidate information on the RSAcademics' website).
A covering letter addressed to Mr John Bennett, Chair of the Governors. The letter should explain your reasons for applying.

If you have any questions about uploading your application documents, please contact Laura Beacon, Project Co-ordinator at applications@rsacademics.com. Laura can also be reached by calling our Head Office on +44 (0)1858 383163.

The process is as follows:

- All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement that your application has been received within two working days of sending it, please contact RSAcademics by telephone.
- Preliminary Interviews will take place with RSAcademics via Teams by appointment on **Friday 6 and Monday 9 December 2024**.
- Long List interviews will take place with the Governors at Cokethorpe School in the **week beginning 6 January 2025**.
- Final Short List interviews will take place at Cokethorpe School in the **week beginning 13 January 2025**.

Cokethorpe School is an equal opportunities employer committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service. This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. The safeguarding responsibilities of this post are detailed in the candidate information brochure and Cokethorpe School's child protection policy can be found on the School's website and alongside the application form on the RSAcademics' website.





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About RSAcademics

Founded in 2001 by Russell Speirs, RSAcademics has advised and supported over 700 schools and educational organisations in the UK and worldwide. Through our working partnerships with heads, leadership teams, boards, staff and parents, we specialise in supporting schools in five main areas: strategy, marketing and research; equality, diversity and inclusion; operational improvement; leadership and governance and philanthropy. We enable schools worldwide to thrive, by finding and developing senior leaders, guiding decision makers, making connections and shaping debate. We are known for the calibre and spirit of our people. We exist entirely to serve schools because we believe that the world needs thriving schools. RSAcademics is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in schools.

Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.