

Exceptional Breadth | Individual Focus

Candidate Information Pack
Assistant to the Head

Deadline for applications | Midday on Wednesday 1 July



From the Head

Thank you for your interest in working at Cokethorpe.

Entering the School, the historic buildings set in extensive, tranquil grounds give the impression of a school steeped in tradition, of ancient chapels, converted stables, cobbled squares, and endless curiosities. Open the front door and you will discover something rather more.



Cokethorpe is a dynamic school. We are driven by a shared commitment: to inspire and guide young people to discover their passions, to pursue excellence and to learn from mistakes. Learning and teaching at Cokethorpe is rigorous and research-informed; our classrooms are energised spaces where ideas bounce.

Our grounds are much more to us than a backdrop; the landscape teems with purposeful activity, whether that be enhancing classroom learning or engaging in our extensive co-curricular programme.

Schools like Cokethorpe can only provide the learning environments they do with the support of colleagues working behind the scenes to keep the gears turning. Our administrative and support staff colleagues play a crucial role in our success.

And at the heart of everything is community. This is as true for support staff as it is for teachers, pupils and parents. Our Common Room is an encouraging environment, where staff share ideas and best practice derived from lived experience, and where colleagues are actively supported to grow their careers and craft to the benefit of all.

I look forward to your application.

Dr Sarah Squire

Head, Cokethorpe School





From the Bursar



I hope this pack provides you with all you need in order to move forward with your application. If you are left with questions, please get in touch with our HR Department; we very much look forward to receiving your application.

Cokethorpe is a special place to work, and you will certainly feel this from the moment you arrive, visitors are given a warm welcome and you will notice that people meet your eye and offer a cheery hello.

The culture at Cokethorpe is collaborative and supportive, each department works hard towards delivering their objectives but will always make time to support colleagues, be it a supportive conversation over a cappuccino from the onsite UE Coffee Shop, working together on a whole School event or simply sharing knowledge and skills.

Harriet Stapleton
Bursar, Cokethorpe School

About Cokethorpe

Cokethorpe is an HMC and IAPS, independent day school for boys and girls from the age of four to eighteen. Situated in beautiful parkland just ten miles outside Oxford, the School has a strong reputation for providing a rigorous, broad curriculum underpinned by a research-informed approach to learning and teaching, and a knowledge that all pupils have the capacity for excellence if encouraged to be ambitious and take responsibility for their own learning.

The School is proud of the fact 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, as well as pursuing Degree Apprenticeships with some of the most distinguished companies in the UK. Results at GCSE and A Level are very positive, with a strong emphasis on the value that is added to pupils through excellent learning and teaching.

Success at Cokethorpe is bolstered by the Leadership Programme, which runs throughout the School and encourages pupils to develop particular traits: integrity, courage, empathy, judgement, ambition and responsibility. The aim is for pupils to take ownership of their own development.

The School has a strong co-curricular programme and, whilst excellence in the classroom is paramount, all members of the Common Room are encouraged to see themselves as playing a role in this wider curriculum. It is a busy, purposeful school in which positive relations develop, and exciting and varied opportunities arise.

Members of Cokethorpe's support staff are full members of the School's Common Room, acknowledging the important roles fulfilled by administrative and support staff operationally and logistically to ensuring the School's overall success.





Job Description

Assistant to the Head

Purpose of the Role

To provide high-level, strategic and confidential support to the Head, enabling her to operate effectively and with impact in a dynamic and ambitious school environment.

This is a pivotal role at the heart of the School, requiring sound judgement, proactive thinking, and the ability to anticipate needs, manage competing priorities, and support the delivery of the Head's strategic priorities.

The Assistant to the Head will ensure the smooth and efficient running of the Head's Office while acting as a trusted gatekeeper, ambassador, and key point of coordination across the School community.

The Opportunity

This is a unique opportunity to work closely with a forward-thinking and strategic Head within a school that combines ambition with a strong sense of community.

The role offers significant variety, visibility, and the chance to contribute meaningfully to the life and ongoing success of the School.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic and Executive Support

- Provide discreet, confidential, and proactive support to the Head
- Act as a trusted partner, anticipating needs and enabling the Head to focus on strategic priorities
- Manage and prioritise a complex and evolving workload on behalf of the Head
- Support the preparation of papers, briefings, and correspondence to a consistently high standard.

Diary and Time Management

- Oversee and manage the Head's complex and fast-moving diary, ensuring effective use of time and alignment with priorities
- Coordinate long-term planning alongside day-to-day scheduling
- Liaise confidently with internal and external stakeholders to arrange meetings and engagements
- Ensure all commitments are supported with appropriate preparation and documentation.

Communication and Relationship Management

- Act as the first point of contact for the Head, managing enquiries with professionalism, warmth, and judgement
- Draft, review, and manage correspondence on behalf of the Head
- Build strong working relationships with pupils, parents, staff, Governors, and external partners
- Represent the Head's Office with credibility and discretion at all times.

Meetings and Governance

- Coordinate the logistics for and support key meetings including Senior Leadership Team, Staff Briefings, and Governing Body meetings
- Prepare agendas, collate documentation, and ensure timely circulation of papers
- Take accurate, high-quality minutes and support effective follow-up of actions where required
- Provide administrative support to the Governors in conjunction with the Bursar's Office.

Operational and Administrative Coordination

- Maintain efficient and secure filing and record systems, including archiving
- Coordinate the annual review and update of School policies with the Senior Leadership Team
- Liaise with Admissions (Registrar) and HR to support key processes, including prospective parent visits and recruitment activity.





Events and School Life

- Lead the organisation of key School events linked to the Head's Office (e.g. Governors' Dinner, Prize Giving)
- Work collaboratively with internal teams to ensure events are delivered to a high standard
- Support the Head's engagement with professional organisations (e.g. HMC, Society of Heads, ISI).

Wider Contribution

- Provide flexible support to the wider School where required, including occasional Reception cover
- Contribute to the positive, professional, and collaborative culture of the School.

Skills and Experience

Essential

- Proven ability to operate with absolute discretion in a confidential environment
- Experience supporting at a senior level, with the ability to manage complexity and competing priorities
- Outstanding organisational skills with a proactive, forward-thinking approach
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the confidence to engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills, with a high degree of accuracy and attention to detail
- Strong IT proficiency, including Microsoft Office and database systems
- Ability to work at pace, remain calm under pressure, and exercise sound judgement
- A high level of professionalism, presentation, and emotional intelligence
- A positive, flexible approach and a well-developed sense of humour.

Desirable

- Experience within an educational setting or similarly complex organisation
- Experience supporting governance or Board-level activity

Appointment of Staff

To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically (as separate PDF documents in one email) the following to Mrs Sophie Crossley, Head of Human Resources, on recruitment@cokethorpe.org before the closing date. We reserve the right to interview prior to the closing date:

- A covering letter addressed to Dr Sarah Squire, Head
- A completed Cokethorpe School support staff application form.

Personal CVs are not required.

Please note that for candidates invited to interview, referees will be contacted prior to the interview date where possible.

Deadline for applications: Midday on Wednesday 1 July.

Early applications are encouraged.

Interviews will take place w/c 6 July 2026.
Interviews may take place before the closing date for suitable candidates. Please apply early to avoid disappointment.





Terms of Appointment

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed and written documentation recorded. Any gaps in employment history will be fully investigated. Safer recruitment procedures are followed and members of the Senior Management Team are accredited by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership/NSPCC for recruitment. Child protection awareness is an integral part of the induction programme for new members of staff.

Following acceptance of an offer of appointment, a formal contract of employment will be drawn up. The following notes provide guidance, without prejudice, on the likely main provisions of the agreement.

Hours:

- Full-time, year-round role, Monday to Friday. 8.15am until 5.30pm
- Flexibility is required to meet the demands of the role and the priorities of the Head's Office.
- To support work-life balance, reduced hours (9.00am – 4.00pm) may be worked during school holiday periods, where workload allows
- 33 days' holiday per year, inclusive of bank holidays, comprising 28 days' annual leave plus 5 days for the Christmas closure. Given the nature of the role, all holiday must be taken outside of term time.

Salary: A competitive salary will be offered, commensurate with experience.

Appointment Date: as soon as possible.

Medical Fitness

Any offer of employment will be conditional upon the appointee's fitness to carry out the role. New employees will be asked, following an offer of employment, to complete a questionnaire regarding medical fitness.

Recruitment Checks

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is a condition of employment that the employee should not have been convicted of a criminal offence against children, nor have been dismissed from or resigned from a previous employer for misconduct of a similar nature. Having a criminal record is not necessarily a bar to employment; it will depend on the nature, circumstances and background of the offence. Our policy on the employment of ex-offenders is available on the vacancies section of the School's website.

All employees are expected to undergo child protection screening and appointments are subject to a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and other pre-employment screening. This includes receipt of at least two references satisfactory to the School, medical fitness, qualifications check where relevant for the post, the right to work in the UK, an identity check, online searches, and an overseas police check if the applicant has worked abroad within ten years from the date of appointment.

All appointments are made in accordance with our Equality policy and applicants should let us know of any special needs they may have so that adjustments can be made if required.





Benefits of Working at Cokethorpe

- Enrolment in the Aviva APTIS defined contribution Pension Scheme
- Fee discount for children of permanent staff subject to Cokethorpe's admissions criteria and means testing
- Personal Accident Insurance
- Employee Assistance Programme via Aviva
- Salary Sacrifice EV Car Scheme
- Cycle to Work Scheme
- Free use of the School's sporting facilities (including the Gym, Tennis Courts and Golf Course)
- Free Meals and Refreshments during term time
- Free use of the School's Coffee Shop in association with Ue Coffee Roasters in term time
- Free parking on site
- A number of subsidised social events
- Annual Flu Vaccination.



Cokethorpe

SCHOOL

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