



Northease Manor School

Lewes, E. Sussex

www.northease.co.uk

Appointment of Head Briefing for candidates

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Northeast Manor School

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Key Dates

October 10	Closing date
October 13	Long list candidates notified
November 2 and 3	First interviews
November 17 - 18	Final interviews



Background briefing

Overview

Northeast Manor is an independent school for children with a variety of specific learning difficulties who have struggled in mainstream schools. It is a registered charity and most of the pupils are funded by their local education authorities, although there is a growing number whose parents pay the fees.

Situated just south of Lewes in East Sussex, the school's centrepiece is a 17th century manor house set in 12 acres of grounds, surrounded by the rolling countryside of the South Downs. This gives the school a spectacular campus along with plenty of room for sports and outdoor activities. The coast is just four miles away.

Currently there are approximately 80 pupils aged 9-18, including a small number of weekly boarders. Typically, pupils are dyslexic, dyscalculic and/or dyspraxic, and may also have ADD, high functioning autism, and social, speech and language difficulties.

This term a new Junior School has been opened, catering for children aged 9 to 11 who have found mainstream primary school difficult.

For a very small school, Northeast Manor has amazing resources, as well as a very strong team of specialist teachers and other support professionals. Each pupil has an individually designed programme that combines academic teaching with – as needed – learning support, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, behaviour counselling, and specific activities to help develop skills and strengths. As part of this the school works in a ground-breaking partnership with Kent and Medway NHS Trust. What makes Northeast unusual is the way that all these support elements are completely integrated with one another, so that each pupil receives a genuinely holistic education that meets his or her personal needs.



Ofsted

The last few years have been overshadowed by a failed Ofsted boarding inspection in January 2014. This revealed various shortcomings and the school's initial response underlined the inadequacies of its then leadership and governing body. To their credit, governors then started a very full process of rectifying policies, practices and compliance throughout the school, its staff, its leadership and in the governing body. That process is now complete and there has been much change, including an almost complete turnover in the governing body and in the school's leadership team.

In the meantime, however, there has been a 20% drop in pupil numbers, brought about by LA nervousness about placing new pupils in the school until Ofsted gave it a clean bill of health. The interim Head has worked closely with Ofsted and local social services to ensure that all requirements are being met. A final re-inspection is expected in the next few weeks and the school anticipates that the flow of new pupils with LA funding will re-commence.

It should be said that parents have been extremely supportive throughout the last few years and recognised that the day-to-day experiences at Northease were first-rate. An increased number of families have joined the school on a self-paying basis.





Governance and leadership

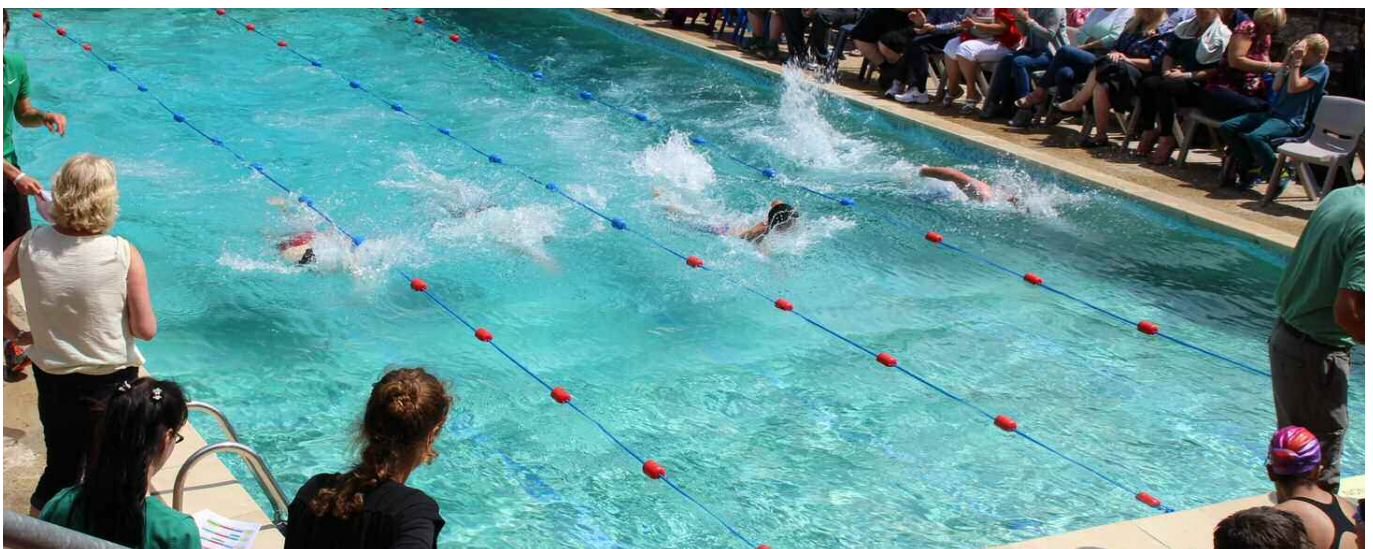
The “new” board of governors has a stronger range of relevant backgrounds and is providing a higher and more informed level of oversight. Governors are also able to act as critical friends to the Head and leadership team. Further appointments are being made to add to their expertise in education, finance, and other professional disciplines.

Currently the school is led by an interim Head, Janet Felkin, the just-retired Head of a very large local secondary school, who has a track record of many years of energetic and successful leadership. Janet quickly came to grips with the various issues and opportunities and has re-structured the SLT and indeed the staff as a whole. She has brought fresh energy to the school, as well as a culture of greater encouragement for the staff and greater aspiration for the students.

Another key appointment has been that of Michelle Hunt as Business Manager. She has made significant changes to processes and to attitudes towards finance and resources. Areas of waste have been addressed and the admin and support teams are now working even more effectively.

The new SLT consists of the Head, two Associate Heads, the Head of Boarding/Safeguarding, the SENCo and the Business Manager. The two Associate Heads were appointed last term and bring specialist expertise and strong leadership skills, as well as the chance to build new relationships with their staff.

With all this now in place, the governors consider this is the time to recruit a new permanent Head. Janet Felkin plans to finish her full-time interim appointment in December, although she will remain available until her permanent replacement joins. It is envisaged that the new head will probably start in September 2017, although an earlier date will be welcomed.





The role

This is an exceptional role for someone looking for a first or second headship, not necessarily with direct experience in a special education school. Most of the role is about broad leadership and general management, as the specialist teaching staff and therapists are very capable. The school is looking for inspiring, lively leadership, by someone who wishes to make his or her mark as an excellent Head who makes a difference across all aspects of a school's operations. This role will straddle academic strategy, teaching and learning activities, pastoral care, and the specialist therapies. There will also be plenty of people management, marketing and relationship-building, and business and organisational development.

Given the school's unusual recent history, the Head's first key task will be to make the most of the staff and resources as soon as everything is again cleared by Ofsted. Fundamentally, this is an outstanding school (in the true sense of the word) so the challenge is to rebuild confidence with our local authority customers whilst leading and inspiring the staff to continue their already excellent work. That will enable the school to fulfil more of its potential and it will respond accordingly.

The new Head will also be encouraged to develop the school in new directions. Filling and stretching the new Junior School, which gives an exciting opportunity to offer integrated 9-18 education that caters for a wide range of special needs. Other opportunities include exploiting the excellent boarding facilities, perhaps to new fee-paying sectors, and developing partnerships with other schools in the local and surrounding areas. The Governors will give your ideas and enthusiasm the backing they need and deserve. The buildings, grounds, and general resources also offer plenty of scope for increasing revenue.





Staff

In total there are 48 staff, including 17 qualified teachers and 5 specialist therapists. The Business Manager manages the administrative, facilities, grounds, catering and cleaning teams. Boarding is overseen by a team of four, including a qualified and experienced Head of Boarding.

The teaching staff are mainly subject specialists with good experience of working with students who have learning and/or behavioural difficulties. The therapy team are similarly experienced, and our partnership with Kent and Medway NHS Trust means there is on-site access to a fuller range of therapies, which is obviously far better for the students concerned.

Staff work as a very happy family; everyone is deeply committed to the success of the school and its pupils, and there is a real sense of community. There was some unhappiness under the previous Head, especially after the initial Ofsted inspection. Morale has been transformed by the interim Head and is now significantly better, especially in light of the progress that has been made in upgrading policies and practices.

Some staff reductions were made last year, to reflect the drop in pupil numbers. This has allowed the school to enter 2016-7 with a balanced budget. The staff appreciate that the school is once again on an upward trajectory and everyone is keen to see it grow back to its previous size and beyond.





Size and structure

As mentioned, there are 80 pupils aged between 9 and 18. In addition, the new Junior School has opened with 8 children aged 9 - 11. The Senior School's notional capacity is around 110, and the Junior School is of course incremental, with further scope to expand.

The Sixth Form has 10 students, who are taken to nearby sixth form colleges for lessons in their chosen academic subjects. Northease provides them with wraparound care and therapy, and there is a dedicated Sixth Form building with study areas, a common room and recreation space.

The School opens at 8.00 am each morning. Boarders, of course, are already on site. Lessons begin at 8.45 and finish at 4.00 pm, followed by evening activities until 5.40 pm. This time is used for homework and for a wide range of clubs.

As well as the weekly boarders, a number of pupils flexi-board on an ad hoc basis.

The education

Northease aims to combine self-confidence with broad learning as well as academic rigour, and the curriculum includes academic subjects as well as more practical ones such as home economics and PE. This breadth gives each pupil the chance to explore his or her potential and to find areas of strength that they can excel at. Small group and 1:1 teaching means that staff can really get to know each student, and classrooms are well resourced to support different teaching techniques.

Pastoral care and personal, physical and social development are fully integrated, using a variety of therapies and specialist staff. Sport and extra-curricular activities are areas of strength.

As mentioned, Sixth Formers are taken to nearby colleges, which allows them to study a wide choice of A level subjects and to follow vocational opportunities.

The Northease product is widely recognised as exceptional, and parents speak extremely highly of the progress their children make. In almost every case it far exceeds their expectations. The academic record is truly excellent and this year's GCSE results make Northease almost best in class for a school of its type, with 44% achieving A*-C in five or more subjects. This compares with 2015 when the figure was 18%.



Premises and facilities

The school campus is spacious and most of the buildings are spread around a central courtyard, with the original manor house at one end. The grounds extend into the distance and include extensive playing fields as well as other open space.

Apart from well-equipped classrooms, there are specialist facilities for the arts, music and home economics, a multi-media library and a focussed hub for occupational therapy and speech therapy. The sports facilities include a small sports hall, a swimming pool, an all-weather pitch and football and rugby posts. The grounds are also used for Forest Skills. This year the pupils are using the greenhouses and bedding areas to start growing their own vegetables, and the School already uses fruit grown on its own trees.

The Junior School and the Sixth Form have their own dedicated buildings, and boarding is located in the upstairs area of the main manor house. Sixth Form have their own boarding space in the Stables building.





Finance

Clearly the recent drop in pupil numbers has affected the school's financial strength, but prudent budgeting and cost controls mean that Northease is still in good overall shape. Budgeting for 2016-7 has been cautious and a breakeven is planned, but some upside is expected once Ofsted clearance is received. The school balance sheet is solid and there are adequate reserves.

The Business Manager is very sound and is able to allocate additional resources where these are needed. Further huge strength comes from the Finance Governor, who is a chartered accountant with a practice specialising in education.

Summary

Northease gives an excellent opportunity for a first or second-time Head to develop their career in a broad general leadership role. The scope of the job and the school's current situation offer opportunities for personal and professional satisfaction that few other Heads have. Setting aside the recent difficulties with Ofsted, you would be taking over a school that has inherent strengths, along with highly able and enthusiastic staff and a solid local and regional reputation.

This appointment is all about providing energy and inspiration as well as sound management and enthusiastic, caring leadership. It is above all a people job, and your ability to build happy and collaborative relationships with staff, parents, pupils and local authority customers will be critical.

The school can now offer hard evidence that it does what it does the right way and not just really well. Its ethos, eagerness and capabilities should allow the right candidate to build great things on these foundations.

Many headships fall down because of stresses between the Head and his or her governors. In this instance you will be taking over a school that has new, diligent and sensible governors, working as a team who really care and who know what good governance means and requires. You will also enjoy building up the newly established senior leadership team, which will still be evolving when you join.

There'll be plenty of enthusiasm and ability to harness and the school is poised to move forward fast and eagerly – are you the person to make it happen?



Person profile

Experience of special needs education is not necessary, though it will obviously be very helpful. Northease Manor has a very strong team of specialist staff and the Head's role is more that of a general leader. However, candidates must be capable of understanding the range of needs, conditions, teaching approaches and therapies, and of empathising with those involved (whether teaching staff, pupils, parents, or specialist practitioners).

Education and professional background	Essential	Desirable
Graduate with recognised teaching qualification	x	
Evidence of recent and regular CPD	x	
Head, Deputy or similar, managing both people and performance	x	
NPQH	x	
Practical experience teaching in a special needs environment		x
Senior management experience in a special school		x
Accredited postgraduate training in SEN		x
Experience within an 11-16 / 11-18 context	x	
Experience within a middle school (7-11) context		x
Experience of providing creative teaching practice		x

Leadership skills and style

Able to motivate, influence and inspire, managing others effectively and sensitively to ensure strong teamwork	x	
Open, honest and supportive style	x	
Able and willing to deploy a range of leadership and management techniques	x	
Quality oriented, with high standards and expectations	x	
A decision maker, able to demonstrate understanding and sensitivity when resolving conflicts	x	
Team player and team leader	x	
Proven ability to plan and manage change	x	

Knowledge and understanding

Performance management of staff	x	
Safeguarding legislation and good/best practice	x	
The national curriculum framework as it affects special schools		x
The SEND reforms and code of practice		x
Wider school operations – domestic, sporting, arts, community activities		x
Marketing awareness		x



Northease Manor School

Business and management skills

	Essential	Desirable
Financial awareness and the ability to balance educational and business desirables	x	
Ability to consider and discuss the widest strategic issues with Governors	x	
Able to interpret and use data to manage and plan	x	
Ability to manage detail as well as the big picture	x	
Good organiser with the ability to prioritise	x	
Ability to manage and work with the Business Manager and administrative and support staff	x	
Awareness of HR legislation and good practice	x	

Thinking and communication skills

Able to think strategically, develop and communicate a coherent vision	x	
Clear, effective and perceptive communicator	x	
Good listener with plenty of empathy	x	
Happy as a public speaker and able to be the visible face of the school	x	
Excellent stakeholder management skills	x	
Able to forge strong links with other schools and to be involved in the wider community	x	

Personal characteristics

High personal standards and willingness to lead by example	x	
A confident personality with the ability to excite, lead, guide and gain the respect of staff, children and parents	x	
Friendly and approachable, with a deep passion for making a real difference to the individual	x	
Adaptable, flexible and resilient; calm under pressure	x	
Sound judgement of people and situations	x	
Self-motivated, with drive and energy	x	
Reliable; delivering against promises	x	
A sense of humour, and the ability to be firm as well	x	
Creative, imaginative and open to new ideas	x	
Ability to manage time effectively	x	
Customer focussed and comfortable with concerned parents	x	

General

Full driving licence		x
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Job description

Primary Responsibility

The Head's role is to lead Northease Manor both strategically and operationally, achieving its various short-term goals and helping to shape and create its future vision.

Essentially, the Head is responsible – and accountable – for ensuring the school's educational, pastoral and financial success, as well as the high quality it seeks to provide in everything it does.

The following is a summary of the full job description, which contains all the usual expectations of the Head of a quality school. The specialised nature of the school adds another dimension, as does its recent history and the need to overcome the disappointment this has caused among some key stakeholders.

Direction

- Lead all staff and pupils with inspiration and passion, as the heart, soul and champion of the school's ethos and its ambition for each pupil and each staff member

High Standards of Education and Care

- Ensure that all pupils achieve as much as possible in academic areas and also in their personal development
- Ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing and highly professional environment and that the pupils' happiness and well-being are paramount at all times

Staff, teaching and learning

- Lead and manage all staff and strengthen and develop individual and team abilities
- Maintain and enhance the school's broad, versatile and integrated approach to academic education and personalised therapies
- Encourage adventurous teaching and learning and foster a love of exploration and self-discovery among the pupils



Communication and marketing

- Create a visible and friendly image as the knowledgeable and inspirational leader of an outstanding specialist school
- Develop excellent relationships with parents, local authority customers, the local community and the wider public
- Build the school's reputation and profile

Business leadership

- Develop an effective partnership with the Business Manager to ensure that plans and budgets meet strategic needs and that financial goals are achieved
- Manage the school so that it is efficient and gives excellent value, balancing educational and pastoral desirables with financial and operational judgement
- Seek and develop new opportunities and new partnerships

Support to Governors

- Ensure compliance through effective policies and practices
- Work closely and effectively with the new Board
- providing timely and comprehensive reporting and professional advice and recommendations
- developing future plans and making them happen





Remuneration and terms

The rewards

A comprehensive reward package will be offered. If appointed, you can expect:

- an excellent salary with significant performance incentives
- full contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme
- a staff discount on your children's fees (if they join the School)
- private health insurance
- investment in your personal training and development

The school cannot provide housing but assistance with relocation will be available, if appropriate.

Terms of employment

The Head's appointment is dependent on

- a satisfactory medical examination and/or a self-disclosure medical questionnaire
- three satisfactory references including one from your current / most recent employer
- proof of qualifications
- Enhanced DBS clearance and barred list check
- proof of your entitlement to work in the UK

A detailed contract will be agreed with the successful candidate, based on normal terms and conditions for independent school headships.

There will be a probationary period of one year during which either party can terminate the employment on one term's notice. Thereafter, two terms' notice will apply.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

The successful candidate will be expected to commit to the following:

Northease Manor seeks to provide a safe environment for children. All staff will adhere to and ensure compliance with the School's Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Statement at all times. If the Head becomes aware of any actual or potential risks to the safety or welfare of children in the school, he or she must immediately report any concerns to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead.



Application process

You are busy, so we are keen to make the application process as easy as possible for you.

Please download the Application Form, which is a Word document and easy to type into. Don't worry about page breaks or formatting. When you have finished, simply e-mail it to **Simon Shneerson at info@simonshneerson.com**. We do not need a lengthy cover letter, as the form includes a personal statement.

Applications must be received by noon on Monday 10th October.

If you would like to discuss the School, the vacancy or any aspect of your application, please feel free to contact Simon Shneerson in strict confidence. His telephone number is 07986 100237 (any day of the week between 8 am and 10 pm) or you can use the e-mail address above.

All applications will be acknowledged and interview dates are given on the front page of this document. We will endeavour to arrange convenient times for each candidate.

Interviews will include a tour of the school, so there is no need to visit before applying, but if you'd like to do this we are very happy to arrange a personal visit on a date that suits you. Please contact Michelle Hunt, the School's Business Manager, on 01273 472915.

The short-list stage will probably require a two-day visit on Thursday/Friday 17th and 18th November. The first day will consist of meetings with key staff and others, while the second day will involve interactions with the Governors. If possible we will consolidate these activities into just one day, but applicants are asked to keep both days clear for the moment.

References will only be requested at short-list stage, and applications can be kept confidential from your current school until then. Please contact Simon Shneerson if you have any specific concerns.

Helpful feedback will of course be offered to unsuccessful candidates.

Thank you for your interest in this post. We look forward to hearing from you and, hopefully, to meeting you in person.