



VACANCY INFORMATION PACK

ASSISTANT GARDENER

FULL TIME



READING BLUE COAT

Dear Applicant,

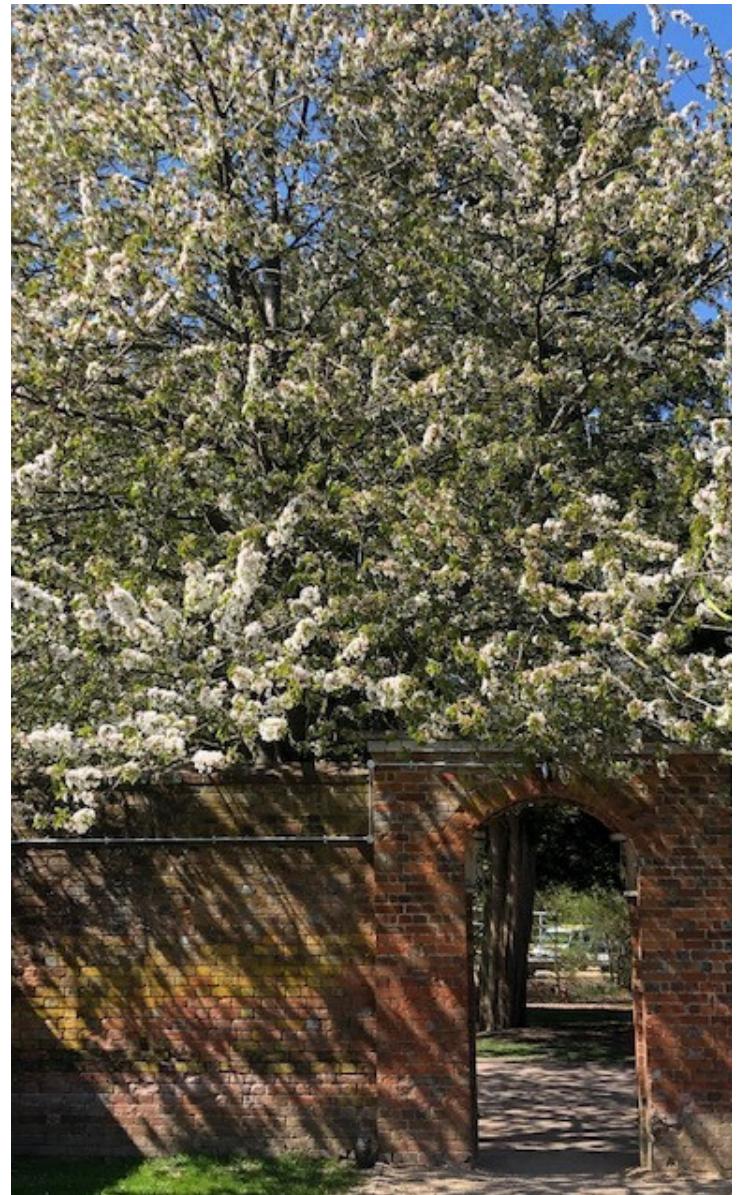
Thank you for your interest in joining the Reading Blue Coat community. I am delighted that you are considering this opportunity, and I hope that this pack gives you a sense of what makes our School such a special place to work.

Reading Blue Coat is a school with a rich heritage and a forward-thinking outlook. Our values – aspiration, compassion, courage, integrity and service – are at the heart of everything we do. They shape not only the enriching education we provide for our students but also the culture we create for our staff: one of ambition, kindness and shared purpose.

We are a vibrant and welcoming school, where talented colleagues work together to inspire a love of learning, nurture individual potential and equip talented young people to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Whether inside or outside the classroom, every role at Blue Coat plays a vital part in our mission to excel.

If you share our commitment to working hard, caring deeply and making a meaningful difference, I encourage you to explore this opportunity further. I would be delighted to meet you soon.

Pete Thomas
Headmaster



INTRODUCTION

Reading Blue Coat is a leading independent co-educational day school for students from ages 11 to 18. As at September 2025, the School has over 850 students and is now into our third year of full co-educational from Year 7 upwards – our Sixth Form has been fully co-educational for over 40 years; all year groups will be co-educational by September 2027.

The School was founded in 1646 by Richard Aldworth, a Master of The Skinners' Company, and a Governor of Christ's Hospital in Horsham, West Sussex. Inspired by the philanthropic nature of Christ's Hospital, Richard Aldworth set aside £4,000 in his Will 'For the education and bringing upp of twenty poore boyes of Reading' Through this one, simple act, Aldworth's Hospital, now Reading Blue Coat, was created. In 1660 the first students walked through the doors of a former inn in Silver Street in the Centre of Reading. And in 1947, Reading Blue Coat moved to the magnificent estate of Holme Park in the Berkshire village of Sonning, where it remains today.

The ethos of the School derives from its Christian foundation and traditions, fostering care and concern within the community and enabling all students to develop their full potential. The School aims to provide a stimulating and friendly atmosphere in which each student can realise his or her full intellectual, physical, and creative potential. Students are encouraged to be self-reliant and adaptable, and the School intends that they will learn the basis of good citizenship, founded on honesty, fairness and understanding of the needs of others. The curriculum provides a balanced blend of academic and co-curricular activities that combine to meet these objectives.

In living this ethos, we strive to fulfil our purpose to:

- Inspire in our students a life-long love of learning, and the confidence to individually flourish.
- Equip our students to thrive in a rapidly changing world.
- Cultivate a warm, kind, noticing culture where students are happy, inclusion is the norm, and diversity is celebrated.
- Develop grounded, socially responsible, outward looking students, ready to lead fulfilling lives and make a positive contribution to the world.
- Nurture a community based on our shared values of aspiration, compassion, courage, integrity and service.

The School employs more than 200 salaried staff, of whom about 50% are teaching staff. Reflecting the move to full co-education, nearly half of our teaching staff are female.



FACILITIES

Reading Blue Coat is located four miles from the centre of Reading, in the Thames-side village of Sonning. It is also three miles from Twyford, located on Crossrail, with fast train service across London. Set in 46 acres of land for students to enjoy, the facilities are very well maintained, and the School continues to invest in the site to add to an impressive infrastructure of buildings. The School makes full use of its riverside location.

Work on our new Performing Arts Centre commenced in summer 2025 and is expected to conclude by summer 2027.

ACADEMIC LIFE

The academic curriculum at Reading Blue Coat is based on the principle that all students should experience a broad and balanced range of basic subjects and skills. From Year 9 onwards, this range is gradually modified, by elements of choice, enabling both the interests and aptitudes of individual students to be reflected. Most lessons are taught initially in classes of mixed ability, although setting occurs in Mathematics in Year 7, in Languages in Year 8, and Science in Year 9. Geology is also a thriving subject. In Year 11, all students take qualifications in English, Maths and Science (all IGCSE) and a Foreign Language. They also take three GCSEs from a broad range of eleven subjects. All students take a GCSE in Religious Studies (full course) in Year 10.

In the Sixth Form students can choose from a range of 24 subjects, including subjects most will not have studied before, such as Economics, Politics and Psychology. Enrichment opportunities in the Sixth Form include the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), and a schedule of visiting speakers. Reading Blue Coat always seeks to stretch and challenge students and the School's Learning Support Department ensures that students with specific learning needs are supported effectively. The School's Learning Research Group ensures a sustained focus on developing teachers and pedagogical enrichment.

2025 academic results were impressive; the results were amongst Blue Coat's best with 84% achieving A*- B at A level, and at GCSE 83% gaining Grades 9 to 7.

The majority of Year 13 leavers proceed to degree courses at universities of which approximately 78% go to the Russell Group Plus universities. Each year over 90% of our students attain places at their first choice university, whilst others are successful in securing future learning opportunities in their chosen career.

PASTORAL

Pastoral care, focused on the individual, is at the heart of the School. We place significant emphasis upon building warm relationships and effective communication with students, for example through regular one-to-one conversations between students and their tutors. Well trained staff provide effective support for student wellbeing, promoting friendship, positive physical and mental health, and helping students find their purpose and passions. Reading Blue Coat's pastoral structure is based around the tutorial system, which is structured in terms of year group and the House system (e.g., 'Year 8 Malthus' tutor group).

There are six Houses: Aldworth, Hall, Malthus, Rich, Norwood and West. The tutors who lead tutor groups are the 'go-to' members of staff for each student, and they are personally responsible for checking in with students each day and overseeing the development of their character and intellectual curiosity. At the heart of the School are the values of aspiration, courage, compassion, integrity and service, and all the activities of tutor groups and Houses seek to promote and embed these values. In addition to pastoral support, the House system further enables students to take part in activities that foster enjoyment and group spirit through a variety of opportunities that include performing arts and sport.

Beyond the core tutor group, Reading Blue Coat provides a rich variety of other forms of pastoral care. Students also benefit from pastoral education through an exciting and responsive Wellbeing and Futures curriculum, which helps them to develop the skills, knowledge, and habits to lead happy and fulfilling lives. They also find themselves in a highly inclusive environment, thoughtfully promoted and celebrated through our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme. When additional support is required, students may also access our newly renovated (2023) Wellbeing Centre, where they may find support from healthcare professionals or access counselling sessions.

CO CURRICULAR

Our co-curricular provision is vibrant and diverse with high levels of engagement throughout the student body. Focused very much on developing the characteristics that make up the school values our co-curricular provision incorporates the Performing Arts, Sport, Activities, Adventure Education, Clubs and Enrichment. All academic staff at the school are expected to contribute to the School's co-curricular provision in a meaningful way.

PERFORMING ARTS

Reading Blue Coat has a highly regarded reputation for drama, dance, music and public speaking with an extensive programme of enrichment, rehearsals and performances throughout the year.

Music is at the heart of the School and many of our pupils attend our weekly ensemble rehearsals which amount to over fourteen every week. Alongside this, a huge number of pupils take the opportunity learn a musical instrument during one-to-one lessons timetabled during the school day. The music department develops a diverse programme of music concerts over every academic year including large scale concerts as well as more intimate recitals, they are also heavily involved in the school musicals.

The School productions are highlights of the cultural calendar and often involve casts of over 60 pupils. Our most recent production of Oliver was a roaring success and perfectly showcased the talent at Reading Blue Coat. Our other recent productions have included Billy Elliot, Lord of the Flies, Footloose, Punk Rock, Curtain Call, The Lion King, The Crucible, and Oliver!. Cast sizes for productions can average up to 100 students for musical productions and 20 – 50 students for school plays. Pupils are also given the opportunity to participate in LAMDA lessons on a one to one basis. Pupils interested in Theatre are also given the opportunity to participate in workshops, playwriting, directing, backstage work and our student technical theatre team is flourishing.

The dance programme is ever evolving with a range of clubs on offer, including street dance, contemporary and commercial dance. Pupils are able to showcase their work in a range of performances and are looking forwards to this years 'Feel the Beat' performance. Our inaugural internal dance competition was a huge success this year with over 60 dancers taking part and showcasing their own choreography. Our pupils have also had the opportunity to represent the school at external dance competitions and have achieved great success in their respective areas.

Public speaking is a hugely popular aspect of school life with over 100 pupils actively involved each week. Over the course of the academic year pupils are able to attend weekly session to hone their skills which are then showcased in a variety of different performances.

SPORT

The School has a strong reputation for the high quality of its sporting teams. Sport plays a key role in developing every student's physical potential whilst embodying the values of the School. Sports are coached to a very high level while providing for, and encouraging those, for whom participation rather than excellence is important.

All students have a timetabled games afternoon where they participate in competitive and recreational team sports with a focus on developing skills and teamwork. The focus sports are athletics, cricket, football, netball, hockey, rowing, and rugby. School sport fixtures and training take place on a Saturday and we are very proud to have 63 competitive teams and around 80% of our student population representing the school at fixtures over the course of an academic year. In recent years a number of our sports teams have achieved national champion status and we have netballers, rowers and rugby players who have been selected to international age group teams and gone on to play professionally.

Alongside our core sport offering we also provide a diverse range of alternative sports that pupils can either participate in recreationally or competitively, these include swimming, basketball, tennis, touch rugby, rugby 7's, cross-country and table tennis.

ACTIVITIES

Our Activities programme is unique to Reading Blue Coat School and allows pupils the opportunity to explore our co-curricular provision during dedicated timetabled lessons every week. Pupils in year 7 to year 9 explore a variety of Adventure Education sessions including Sailing, Bouldering, Paddle Boarding and are also given the opportunity to explore our state of the art on-site High and Low Ropes Course. Activities is also the place where our pupils are introduced to Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and the Aldworth Partnership.

Pupils in years 10 to 13 come together every Thursday to participate in Senior Activities. This is split into six categories and pupils are encouraged to choose a different strand each term. The sections are: Adventure, Creative Arts, Leadership and Social Action, Sport and Wellbeing, Service, Super Curriculum. There are over 40 sessions available to students with the aim of the sessions being to explore new interests and challenge themselves whilst embodying the school's values.

ADVENTURE EDUCATION

Our Adventure Education allows pupils the opportunity to explore our wonderful site and surrounding areas whilst really focusing on character education. The Adventure Education programme is very much intertwined with our Activities programme which runs each week for every year group across the school. We are very proud of our Adventure Education facilities which includes use of the river for paddle sports, a high and low ropes course as well as an indoor climbing wall.

Alongside our weekly adventurous activities we are also very proud of our successful Duke of Edinburgh programme which is open to all pupils from year 9 and above. Pupils are highly engaged and we recently had over 100 pupils complete their Bronze Award from year 9.

As part of our Adventure provision we also run a programme of expeditions each academic year, this year our pupils will have the opportunity to visit Eswatini over the Summer break. During every summer term every pupil will participate in a school residential with year groups visiting a range of destinations like Pembrokeshire, Devin and the Peak District.

The Adventure Education department is also home to our Combined Cadet Force where pupils have the opportunity to join the Army, Navy and RAF sections. CCF sessions take place during Activities sessions and are hugely popular with over 170 students on roll.

CLUBS AND ENRICHMENT

We have a huge number of clubs and enrichment activities that run at Reading Blue Coat with over 100 different sessions running every week. These sessions take place during lunch time and after school and all academic staff are expected to contribute to our co-curricular provision. Nearly all of our activities are included in the school fees and pupils are welcome to participate in as many as they want. Our pupils are heavily involved in shaping the provision and in the last 18 months we have seen the introduction of Dungeons and Dragons Club, Photography Club and Craft Club at the request of our pupils.

FOUNDATIONERS & FOUNDATION AWARDS

The diversity of our educational community is underpinned by the School's centuries long commitment to transformational bursaries. Reading Blue Coat offers means tested bursaries worth 100% of the school fees, plus additional extras such as uniform, lunch, travel, trips and a laptop, to two students annually who live within the borough of Reading. Our ambition is to grow the number of Foundationers in the School through fundraising.



COMMUNITY

Reading Blue Coat students are encouraged to be aware of their place in the wider world and to show consideration for all those with whom they come into contact. These principles are based on the ideas handed down by Richard Aldworth who founded the School in 1646.

In recent years the School has greatly enhanced its links with the wider community through the work of the Aldworth Partnership. The Aldworth Partnership is the umbrella term for the School's student led partnership and charity work. As well as fundraising for local charities such as crisis charities, special needs schools, food banks and homeless charities, the Aldworth Partnership also has strong links to local primary schools. Work with these primary schools includes helping with lunch time clubs, running a school choir and reading clubs. We also often host primary schools for Science and Design and Technology days onsite as well as in our Forest School based in our woodlands. Whilst our main focus is for our students to take part in meaningful partnership work, it is also an opportunity for our Staff to give back to the local community...

As the Aldworth Partnership continues to grow, the long-term aim is that all Blue Coat students have the opportunity to be involved in transformative service projects in the local and wider community at some point in their school career.

The Foundation Office provides links with our alumni (Old Blues) after they leave the School so that they continue to feel part of our special community. Old Blues are offered many opportunities to come back to Blue Coat for reunions and social events. There are also opportunities to give back through our Futures programme such as mentoring opportunities and giving talks to students. Reading Blue Coat Connect is a networking site specifically for Blue Coat community and Parents, Old Blues and Staff are encouraged to join. The Foundation Office fundraises for specific School projects such as bursaries and capital projects as the need arises.

Further information is available on the School's website at www.rbc.org.uk and Muddy Stilettos Schools Review Guide
<https://berkshire.muddystilettos.co.uk/kids/school-reviews/reading-blue-coat-sonning/>



GROUNDS DEPARTMENT

The School estate covers 46 acres of rural Berkshire. It is located on the banks of the River Thames in Sonning-on-Thames. The grounds consist of a large number of prestige sports pitches; formal lawns and gardens; and extensive woodland. The Grounds Department are a highly motivated team consisting of the following:

Grounds Manager
Deputy Grounds Manager
Senior Sports Turf Operative
Groundsperson
Assistant Gardener
Assistant Groundsperson

The School has a significant ongoing development programme with new facilities, buildings and playing areas, with substantial new landscaping planned.

The Grounds Department is situated in a purpose built Grounds and Maintenance building incorporating workshops, storage and staff rest area.

The department uses a variety of professional equipment, ranging from tractors of varying sizes; a fleet of specialised turf mowers; and a new maintenance fleet of handheld equipment.

This is a busy department responsible for the maintenance and improvements of the School estate and outstanding visual presentation of the School facilities. The team work together to produce well-presented grounds and gardens that receive frequent accolades and are enjoyed by parents, students and visitors.

The Assistant Gardener will focus mainly on the day-to-day maintenance and creation of the School's formal gardens and amenity areas. In the spirit of effective team working, you may occasionally be called upon to assist in maintaining the grass sports fields and woodland areas. We work to recognised national standards and expect the highest standards of horticultural practice at all times. This position offers an exciting opportunity for individuals with a passion for gardening and commitment to excellence.



For an informal telephone conversation about the role, contact contact Matt Wharton, Grounds Manager, on 0118 933 5850 or email MXW@rbcs.org.uk





LINE MANAGER

Day to day duties will be overseen by the Deputy Grounds Manager with the Grounds Manager having overall management and strategic oversight of the team.

DEPARTMENT

Grounds

CONTRACT STATUS

Permanent full-time contract to commence in March 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter. The first 6 months of service is served as a probationary period.

SALARY

Salary will be in the range of £26,208 to £27,229 per annum depending on experience and qualifications. Annual salary is paid by bank transfer on the 25th of the month, or next working day thereafter, in 12 equal payments throughout the year.

MAIN PURPOSE OF THE POST

Working as part of the Grounds team, to ensure that the grounds and gardens of the School campus are maintained to the highest standard. Responsible for the development and maintenance of the gardens under the direction of the Deputy Grounds Manager.

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The main responsibilities are as follows:

- Prepare, implement and monitor weekly, monthly and annual maintenance programmes to ensure the required consistent standards are achieved.
- To undertake horticultural operations, e.g. soil cultivation, digging, forking, mulching, watering, raking, weeding, edging, pruning, seed sowing, bed preparation and planting, grass cutting, hedge trimming, shrub pruning, lawn maintenance and cultivation.
- To work within the estate budget managed by the Grounds Manager.
- Maintain the gardens of the Headmaster's house on the estate.
- Use and maintenance of hand tools and basic light machinery and plant.
- Use of cylinder and rotary mowers, strimmers, leaf blowers.
- Adjustments of mower height and quality of cut, etc. Oil level checks and check for damage to any mower.
- To assist in weed control within the School site through chemical and mechanical operations.
- Ensure work areas are kept clean, tidy and secure at all times.
- To ensure all equipment, machinery and buildings are secure.
- To be aware of Health and Safety requirements noting that all duties must be carried out to comply with current Health & Safety at Work legislation.
- To be aware of and report any security risks posed within the School.
- To carry out gritting, salt spreading, snow cleaning, as necessary, including highway footpaths through the School.
- To ensure pathways and roads are maintained to a clean and tidy standard.
- On occasion, to work alongside other departments to facilitate School functions and events.
- To undertake such other duties, as detailed by your line manager, that may from time to be required to ensure the smooth running of the School.
- To act professionally and with good conduct at all times.
- To undergo training as required.
- To promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils at the School.
- To use technical and operational knowledge to ensure a safe environment.

Please note that this Job Description is not exhaustive and the employee may be expected to undertake additional duties if required.

ASSISTANT GARDENER

The person specification focuses on the knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications required to undertake the role effectively. It is expected that the successful applicant will have and can demonstrate:

Knowledge and Experience	Essential	Desirable
1-2 years professional gardening experience	x	
Clear understanding of relevant Health and safety legislation	x	
Excellent plant knowledge	x	
Skills, Attributes and Qualifications	Essential	Desirable
Competent machine operator	x	
Ability to work without supervision and be part of a team	x	
Hard working with attention to quality and detail	x	
Trustworthy, reliable and prepared to work in all weathers	x	
Self-motivated and dedicated	x	
Be able to work unsupervised	x	
Good communication skills	x	
Must be able to prioritise own workload	x	
A flexible and enthusiastic approach to work	x	
A willingness to be adaptable and to work weekends and unsociable hours if required	x	
Horticulture Level 2 or equivalent		x
Horticulture Level 3 or equivalent		x
Spraying certificate (PA1,PA6)		x
A valid driving licence		x

Closing date for applications: 09:00 on Thursday 19 February 2026

Applications are reviewed and shortlisted on a rolling basis and we reserve the right to interview, appoint and close adverts early due to the volume of applications we receive.

We therefore encourage you to apply at the earliest opportunity to avoid disappointment as once we have closed a vacancy you will be unable to submit your application form.

Applications should be submitted using the School's Employment Application Form, which can be downloaded from our website "Vacancies" page www.rbcs.org.uk/vacancies/

This should be submitted with your letter of application, by email to: recruitment@rbcs.org.uk

Contact for questions about the application process should be addressed to Mrs Inga Gregory, Director of HR, Reading Blue Coat School, Holme Park, Sonning Lane, Sonning-on-Thames, RG4 6SU.

Email: recruitment@rbcs.org.uk



BENEFITS



PLACE OF WORK

Reading Blue Coat School,
Sonning on Thames, Berkshire.



MEALS

Lunch and break time refreshments are provided free of charge by the School.



SPORTS FACILITIES

Free membership of the School Sports Centre with access to fully equipped gym and swimming pool.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

Confidential independent support service available to staff when you most need it.



WORKING HOURS

Working hours are annualised to allow for autumn, winter and summer daylight working hours with a 30 minute unpaid daily break: Autumn (September to October 40 hours per week) 07:30 to 16:00; Winter (November to March 37.5 hours per week) 08:00 to 16:00; Summer (April to August 42.5 hours per week) 07:30 to 16:30. In addition, some Saturday working is required (usually on a one weekend in three rota during the summer term) for which overtime payment or time off in lieu is provided.



PARKING

Free Car parking is available on site.



LEAVE ENTITLEMENT

30 days paid annual leave three of which are retained to cover the Christmas closedown period plus 8 public holidays. Holiday year runs from 1 September to 31 August annually.



CYCLE SCHEME

Tax-free Cycle to Work Scheme is offered by salary sacrifice.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strong commitment to support professional development with a dedicated people development budget.



PENSION

Membership of the RBCS Group Personal Pension Scheme (employee contribution of 5% of salary and employer contribution is 8% of salary. Life Assurance at 2x gross salary.



CAR SCHEME

Leased cars scheme offered by salary sacrifice affording large savings.



THE BLUE COAT BENEFIT HUB

Through the Blue Coat Benefit Hub you can access discounts, rewards, and perks on thousands of the brands that you love to shop with including travel; motoring; electronics; clothing; education; entertainment; restaurants; health and wellness; beauty and spa; insurance; sports and outdoors.



Reduction in RBCS school fees for employees' children school fees offered after 6 months service:



50% reduction for all full time staff (pro-rated for part time staff).



Fees (from September 2025) are £8,279 per term.

All staff, both teaching and support, form part of a qualified and experienced team, which functions at its best in being mutually supportive in a common goal: to provide the best possible education for all Blue Coat pupils.

Relationships between staff and pupils at Blue Coat are often remarked upon by visitors and parents for being warm, relaxed and mutually respectful.

Click on the link to find out more about some of our staff. Can you see yourself as part of the Blue Coat team?

www.rbcs.org.uk/the-school/meet-the-staff/



GETTING HERE

BY CAR

We are located in the village of Sonning-on-Thames, just off the A4, between Reading and Twyford.

We are about 15 minutes' drive from Junction 10 of the M4 motorway. From there, take the Reading / Bracknell turnoff at Junction 10 on to the A329M to Reading. At the roundabout by the flyover take the third exit (A4) towards Maidenhead. Follow the dual carriageway over the next roundabout and up the hill. Over the railway bridge, turn left into Sonning Lane. The School is about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile on the left.

BY BUS

The School and village of Sonning is served by local bus services 128 and 129 (operated by Courtney) from Reading to Wokingham.

Also by service 850 (operated by Arriva Bus) from High Wycombe, Marlow, Henley, Twyford to Reading. Alight at the junction of Sonning Lane and Bath Road, from where it is a short walk.

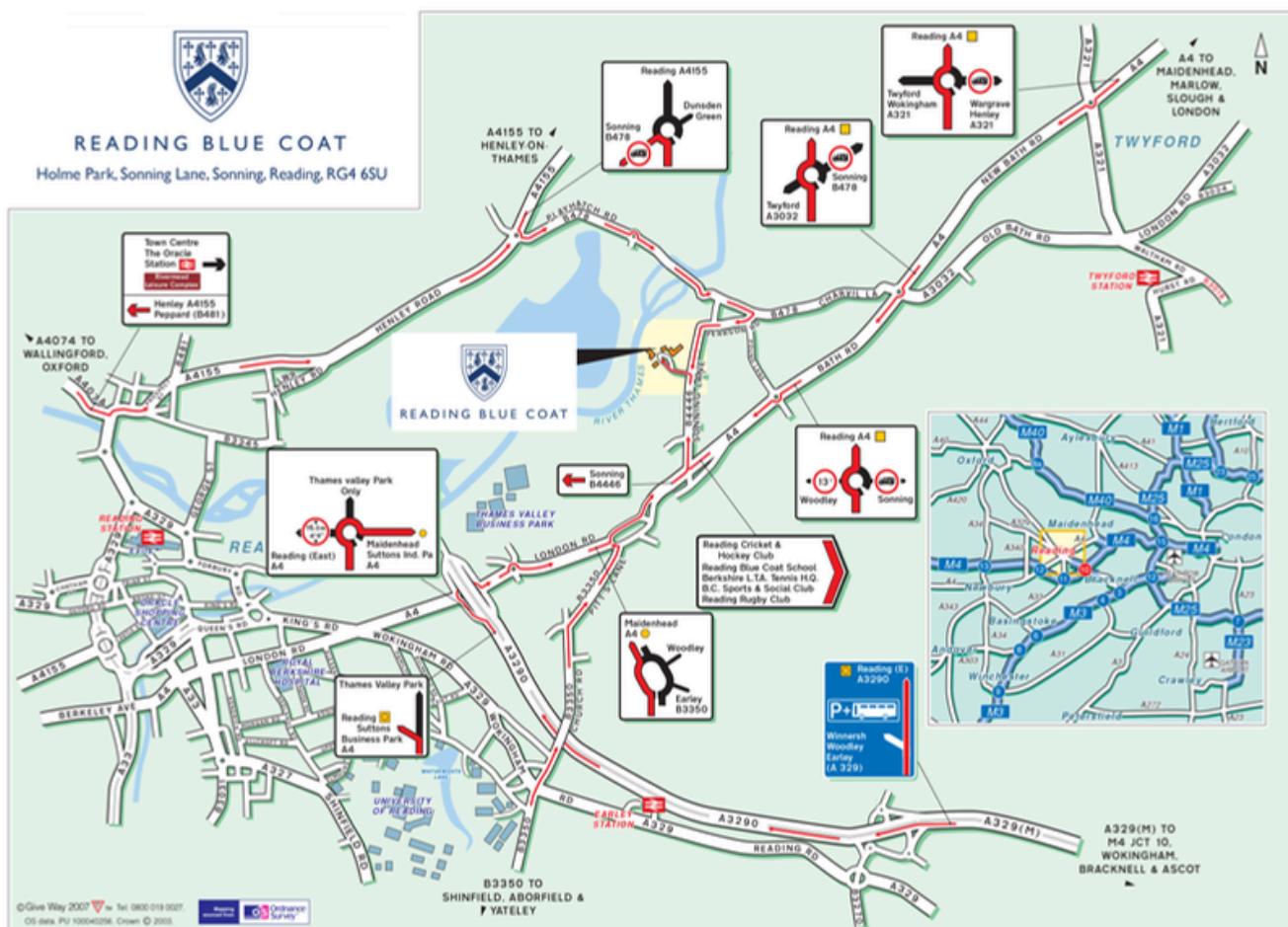
BY TRAIN

Our nearest rail links are at Reading central station (mainline to London, Wales and the West), which is about 5 miles from the School (about 15 minutes by taxi).

We are also served by local stations at Twyford, which is about 3 miles away (about 10 minutes by taxi), and at Earley, which is about 4 miles away (about 15 minutes by taxi).



For information, call Reception: 0118 944 1005



ONE READING BLUE COAT
— our community —



READING BLUE COAT

Holme Park, Sonning Lane, Sonning-on-Thames, Berkshire RG4 6SU
Tel: 0118 944 1005 rbcs.org.uk