



THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
BRISTOL

Bursar

Candidate information brochure





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Introduction

The Downs Preparatory School is a leading independent, co-educational preparatory school and nursery for children aged between six months and 13 years. It is a place of happiness and joy; a place of opportunity and diversity; a place of endeavour and aspiration. A close community, children are fully known as individuals and the School can identify the spark that lights their passion for learning.

The Downs Preparatory School was founded in 1894 in a substantial house overlooking the extensive parklands of Bristol, known as the Downs. In 1927 it was relocated, according to Mr Wilfred Harrison, the Headmaster of the time, to get away from the 'incessant roar of traffic' and the 'nerve-racking turmoil of the city'. It was moved across the Clifton Suspension Bridge to Charlton House on the Tyntesfield Estate. In the autumn of 2002, the School and parklands were bought from the estate of Lord Wraxall by the charity that owns and operates the School.

Today at the end of the long meandering drive children thrive in the beautiful 60 acre estate centred around our historic main building, Charlton House. We encourage children to enjoy their surrounding and offer them:

Space to Explore
Space to Express
Space to Excel

Behind the scenes of our busy school is a dedicated team of operational and support staff; from the caterers and grounds staff to the accountants and matrons. Every staff member plays their part in making the Downs School an extraordinary environment for learning.





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Welcome

We are delighted that you are considering a role at the Downs School. Our parents and staff say that this is a truly special place, where both adults and children make friends and stay friends. There is a wonderful feeling of community amongst the staff combined with an ambition to provide superb facilities to support the development of each child.

As the most senior non-teaching member of staff, the Bursar is a key member of the School's Senior Leadership team and will work closely with me and the Board of Governors in developing and delivering the School's financial strategy. They take full responsibility for the leadership and management of support staff and the direction of operational functions including finance, estates, IT and compliance.

The School is at an important juncture in its development and I am looking forward to working with a dynamic, financially astute problem solver who can, together with me, lead the School into its next exciting phase.

We look forward to receiving your application.

Debbie Isaachsen
Headteacher





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Our Community

The warmth of the Community is a distinguishing feature of the Downs. It is a happy place with a wonderfully close and supportive community full of goodwill.

Parents, pupils, staff and governors share a common aim to provide an exceptional whole learning environment

To nurture full potential in any child or adult, it is essential to understand them as individuals. For this reason there is an exceptional Pastoral Care network available to everyone at the Downs. All new members of staff undertake a full induction process covering safeguarding, roles and responsibilities and are allocated a mentor as well as having the support of their line manager.

Aims & Ethos

Childhood is cherished at the Downs; character is shaped by strong traditional values and happy, accomplished and grounded young adults are nurtured and developed. The Downs' children enjoy a vibrant and stimulating curriculum. Academic study is key and pupils embrace a healthy work ethic whilst also celebrating the creative, the physical and the spiritual as much as the intellectual.

Bertie's is the School's nursery and is set in its own considerable grounds along the driveway. Providing for children from 6 months to 4 years, it is a wonderful environment in which the children begin to learn.

Children join Reception at age four and are welcomed into a happy and caring Pre-Prep Department where they are encouraged to start their learning journey in a safe and secure atmosphere with the benefit of extensive outdoor space.

The Prep School is where the broad, diverse curriculum is celebrated fully with each child being allowed to develop their strengths whilst preparing for Senior School entry. Greater independence and responsibility in Years 7 and 8 give a confidence that is noticeable and welcomed at interview for Senior Schools locally and nationally.

Experience proves that those who derive pleasure and success from activities outside the classroom flourish within it.

The Downs enjoys extensive facilities beyond the classroom including a theatre, sports hall, dance studio, drama studio and outdoor swimming pool. It is incumbent on the Bursar and their finance and facilities teams to ensure that a robust revolving budget results in maximum utilisation of broad and well-maintained facilities that are available to the majority of children to enrich their experience at school.

The School has an earnest focus on public benefit and promotes use of its extensive facilities to the local community and in particular where charitable fund raising can be achieved through activities.





Appointment Context

After almost 10 years of dedicated service to the Downs, our Bursar will be stepping down from Summer 2021. She has taken the School through huge changes and challenges, not least of which have been the TPS negotiations, the development of our Nursery business and the safe re-opening of the School during the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the start of the Autumn 2020 term the Downs was fortunate to welcome our new Headteacher, Mrs Debbie Isaachsen and she and her husband, also a teacher, are already making a sensitive and yet significant impact on this vibrantly successful establishment.

Structure and Organisation

The Senior Leadership Team consists of the Headteacher, the Bursar, the Head of Bertie's Nursery and the two Assistant Heads. The Team meet formally once a week but informally most days to address new issues that arise. The Bursar has line management responsibilities for a number of key staff as indicated in the Job Description below. The size of the School is such that the Bursar is involved in all aspects of School life.

Inspection

The School underwent an Educational Quality and Focused Compliance Inspection in September 2017. A copy of the report can be found [here](#).

Governance

The Headteacher and the new Bursar will be supported by our outstanding Board of Governors who all take a strong interest in the School and who are all immensely committed to its success. The Governors have a wide range of experiences and skills; they have exceptional insight into the independent sector. Simultaneously they have an excellent understanding of the day-to-day working of the School.

A number of committees meet termly and report into the main Board Meetings. These include the Bursary, Finance, Risk and Regulatory, Health and Safety, Strategy, Nursery and Remuneration Committees. Papers for the Board are well prepared and distributed by the Bursar, supported by a Minute Secretary. Meetings are focused and open and minutes ensure clarity on decisions and responsibilities.

Reporting directly to the Headteacher and with direct line of communication with the Chair of Governors and the Chair of Finance, the new Bursar will ensure that the School successfully fulfils its aims whilst running smoothly, efficiently and compliantly. They will also work closely with the Strategy Committee to realise the collaborative vision of the School.

Finances

The Chairman of Governors summarises the School's financial situation as follows:

Finances have been managed prudently and robustly with continuous attention to cost control. The tight financial control has allowed the School to confidently keep fee increases below the national average over the last decade, whilst the Finance Committee has regularly reviewed the sustainability of the fee structure. The School has a record of generating healthy surpluses and has access to sufficient cash and funding to allow the continuation of a number of existing and the consideration of other new initiatives.

This said, the current financial, economic and political context of the sector will require prudent financial management over the next few years.



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Job Description

The Bursar is a key member in the leadership of the Downs Preparatory School and Bertie's Nursery School. Line management responsibilities cover the Accounts Team and Estate and Facilities Department.

Appointed by the Headteacher, in consultation with the Governing Body, the Bursar's primary reporting line is to the Head but is also responsible to the Chair of Governors for their duties as Clerk to the Governors, including financial reporting and strategic management information.

The Bursar therefore plays a key role in supporting the Head and Governors to shape and implement the School's development strategies. These strategies focus on delivering an excellent educational experience with a sound financial foundation and a growing Nursery business. There is also a drive to develop alternative income sources to maximise the use of all available School resources.

Where this job description refers to 'School', for the most part, this relates to both School and Nursery businesses.

Role title:

Bursar and Clerk to the Governing Body

Line Manager:

Headteacher

Line Management:

Facilities Manager, Accounts Team, HR Administrator, IT Technician, Head Matron

Committee Membership:

Bursary, Finance, Health & Safety, Nursery, Remuneration, Risk & Regulatory, Strategy

Financial Management

(Supported by Assistant Accountant and Accounts Officer)

- Produce regular, timely and accurate financial information for reporting to and advising the Head, Finance Committee and Board
- Ensure financial procedures and controls are robust
- Provide comprehensive annual budgets and regular reports to key staff and Governors, including delivery of departmental budgets to academic and facilities staff
- Prepare medium and long term forecasts of financial performance, including cash flow forecasts, to support the School's strategic planning process
- Monitor and ensure effective debt collection
- Management of the annual audit process and preparation of the Trustees' report
- Maintain asset register
- Manage and advise on fee remissions including bursaries and staff discounts
- Advise on School fee levels and salaries
- Administer fees, salaries, payroll, pensions schemes and insurance
- Maximise effective use of the School's bank deposits
- Manage procurement of goods and services; regularly reviewing contracts and licences
- Maintain analyses of KPIs and review against benchmarking statistics, reporting findings and recommendations to the Head and Governing Body
- Maintain collaborative relationships with key advisers – banking, accounting, taxation law, insurers and the ISBA



Clerk to the Governing Body

(Supported by the Minute Secretary)

- Draft and agree agendas for Committee and Board meetings
- Ensure timely despatch of pre-meeting information and post-meeting minutes
- Maintain the register of notifiable interest
- Maintain the Governors Handbook including Committees' terms of reference
- Provide induction for new members of the Board
- The Bursar is Company Secretary and therefore carries out statutory duties to Companies House and the Charity Commission
- Ensure adequate liability insurance is held

Risk Management

(in some cases in conjunction with HR Administrator and/or the Facilities Manager)
Lead the School in;

- Health and Safety including site security and effective staff training (the Bursar is the Chair of the Health and Safety Committee)
- Devising and implementing an effective accessibility plan that provide adjustments and improved access for all pupils, staff and visitors
- The preparation and effective implementation of policy relating to Health and Safety, First Aid, effective Risk Assessment and Fire Safety
- Safer recruitment of staff, employment legislation and maintenance of the Single Central Register
- Negotiate employment contracts including remuneration, liaise with staff and legal advisers on compliance with employment law, disciplinary and grievance matters
- Data Protection compliance including GDPR (the Bursar is the School's Data Protection Officer) and effective implementation of policies
- Support and advise the School in;
 - Critical incident and business continuity planning
 - Charity legislation and Company law
 - ISI inspection
 - Strategic and operational risk management

- Ensure, through lead Matron;
 - a safe delivery of first aid and medical treatment
 - A robust system for the identification and management of allergies and other health conditions
 - effective accident reporting

Estate & Facilities Management

- Protect and manage the School's estate in legal terms and in accordance with its listed status, maintaining access rights and dealing with boundary matters
- Ensure, through the Facilities Manager :
 - The estate, grounds and buildings are maintained in excellent order through the management of regular maintenance programmes, including the overview of cleaning processes
 - The delivery of external contract work is managed effectively and within budgets
 - Cost effective use of School transport and safe maintenance of vehicles
 - Promote the commercial potential of the School site for external events to increase alternative income streams ensuring appropriate hire contracts are entered into and licences obtained
- Ensure all assets are adequately insured
- Ensure, through the IT staff;
 - an effective rolling programme of replacement and improvement of facilities
 - the provision of and effective IT infrastructure which meets the evolving needs of the School
- Oversee outsourced catering contract with close cost control, ensuring staff recruitment and food hygiene practices are compliant





Person Specification

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Essential: These are qualities without which the applicant could not be appointed.

Desirable: These are extra qualities which can be used to choose between applicants who meet all of the essential criteria.

Method of Assessment

- Production of the applicant's certificates
- Contents of the application form
- Interview
- Professional references

Experience

Essential: The categories of work or organisations, types of achievements and activities that would be likely to predict success in the role.

- Significant track record of leadership and senior management experience
- Extensive experience of effective financial management and budgeting
- Experience of project management or management of support services

Desirable: The categories of work or organisations, types of achievements and activities that would be likely to contribute to success in the role.

- Working knowledge of Sage accounting software
- Working knowledge of school management information systems
- Experience of the operational demands of working in a busy school

Knowledge

Essential: The knowledge required by the applicant to perform effectively in the role:

- Knowledge of accounting
- An understanding of IT infrastructure and its impact on the business
- Knowledge of law and practice relating to PAYE, Income Tax, benefits in kind and VAT
- Working knowledge of the law with regard to employment legislation and customer contracts

Desirable: The knowledge that would enable the applicant to perform effectively in the role:

- Knowledge of financial management of an independent school
- An understanding of IT infrastructure and its impact on education

Qualifications

Essential: The professional, technical or academic qualifications that the applicant **must have** to undertake the role or the training that they **must have** received:

- Degree level or professional qualification equivalent

Desirable: The professional, technical or academic qualifications that the applicant would ideally have to undertake the role or the training that they should ideally have received.

- Accounting qualification

Skills

Essential: The skills required by the applicant to perform effectively in the role.

- Ability to produce budgets, reports, cash flows with strong analytical skills
- An ability to keep pace with a broad range of operational responsibilities when under pressure
- Numerate and high level of IT literacy, particularly in the use of MS Excel
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Ability to work to tight deadlines and be able to re-prioritise at short notice

Desirable: The skills that would enable the applicant to perform effectively in the role:

- An established track record of being able to motivate and engage others



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Personal Competencies & Qualities

Essential: The personal qualities that the applicant requires to perform effectively in the role.

- Strategic thinker to support the development of the business
- High level of personal discretion, professionalism and integrity
- Collaborative team player who is able to develop strong working relationships with staff and Governors at all levels
- Customer-focused
- Flexibility – a willingness to work outside School hours
- High personal standards of appearance, behaviour and punctuality
- A willingness to reflect on personal practice and to improve on work-based procedures
- Proactive, energetic and enthusiastic
- An attention to detail and not overlook the little things

Desirable: The personal qualities that would assist the applicant to perform effectively in the role.

- A good sense of humour and a cheerful disposition
- A positive outlook - a view of optimism
- Enthusiasm and commitment
- Tolerance and patience
- Perseverance and determination
- Humility
- Kindness, sensitivity and caring





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Terms & Conditions

The School is prepared to offer an attractive salary to secure the best candidate.

A formal contract, detailing terms and conditions, will be drawn up on appointment. The following notes provide guidance, without prejudice, on the likely main provisions.

General notes:

- The salary available will be commensurate with the seniority of the post and the experience of the successful candidate. The Governors review the salary annually, effective from 1st September
- There is a generous discount on fees for the Bursar's dependent children as pupils at the School, which is currently not a taxable benefit
- The Bursar's performance will be subject to a regular review
- The School will be supportive, whenever possible, of external professional activities including committee membership and professional body activities, as agreed with the Headteacher. The School is a member of the ISBA and AGBIS and the current Head is a member of IAPS
- Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Full details are given on the application form
- Candidates will be asked to undertake identity and qualification checks which conform to the school's safeguarding policy. They must also agree to references being taken up and checks made with past employers
- The successful applicant will be required to complete a self-disclosure Medical Questionnaire
- The appointment is subject to satisfactory references, clearance from the DBS, proof of identity and qualifications and a medical report





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Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to contact Liz Mount, the School's HR Administrator, by email or telephone for further information:

01275 852008
recruitment@thedownsschool.co.uk

The **deadline** for receipt of applications is **Midday on Monday 1 February 2021**.

Interested candidates should complete an application form and provide a full CV together with a covering letter and send to the above email address or by post to:

Liz Mount
HR Administrator
The Downs Preparatory School,
Charlton Drive,
Wraxall. BS48 1PF

Under current legislation we are required to obtain a candidate's full employment and education history including dates since the age of 16. Failure to disclose a complete history will cause unnecessary delays in the processing of applications.

If you have a disability and need any assistance with the application process please email recruitment@thedownsschool.co.uk

References

We reserve the right to seek references for all shortlisted candidates and may approach former employers for information to verify particular experience or qualifications prior to final round interviews.

Please notify us on your application form if you do not wish us to take up references in advance of the interview.

All referees will be asked if the candidate is suitable to work with children.

Interviews

Longlisted applicants will be invited to a video interview via an emailed letter. These interviews will take place in **the week commencing Monday 8 February** and will provide an opportunity to discuss a candidate's relevant skills and experience.

Final round interviews will take place at the School on **Wednesday 24 February 2021**.

Interviews are conducted by at least two members of staff or governors, one of whom will always have completed Safer Recruitment training.

All candidates invited to interview must bring photographic ID, documents confirming any educational or professional qualifications that are necessary for the post together with evidence of right to work in the UK, their address and if appropriate, evidence confirming any change of name. Full details will be sent within the Invite to Interview letter.

Candidates with a disability should inform the School prior to interview of any reasonable adjustments that are necessary for the interview to take place.

When the interviews have been completed, unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by phone.

