

COGNITA

DOWNSEND  
SCHOOL

Candidate Brief for the appointment of  
**Executive Head Teacher**  
at



DOWNSEND  
SCHOOL

*Inspiring Young Minds*

# Discover purpose, create change

## Thrive with Cognita

Welcome, and thank you for considering us. You're about to embark on a journey that could shape not only your career but the future of education.

At Cognita, we believe in the power of individuals to create a lasting impact. Joining us means being part of a community where your ideas, passion, and drive can truly make a difference.

This candidate pack is your guide to discovering how you can thrive with us.

### Inside this pack you'll discover:

1. **About Cognita** – learn about what fuels us and keeps us moving forward.
2. **Our people promise** – learn about the role you'll play and the impact you'll make with us.
3. **School introduction** – learn about the great school you'll join.
4. **Role overview** – understand how we see you contributing and explore what's expected of you.
5. **Benefits** – discover the rewards of becoming part of Cognita.
6. **Application process** – find out what's next and how to apply.

We're excited to see how you'll help shape the future at Cognita.

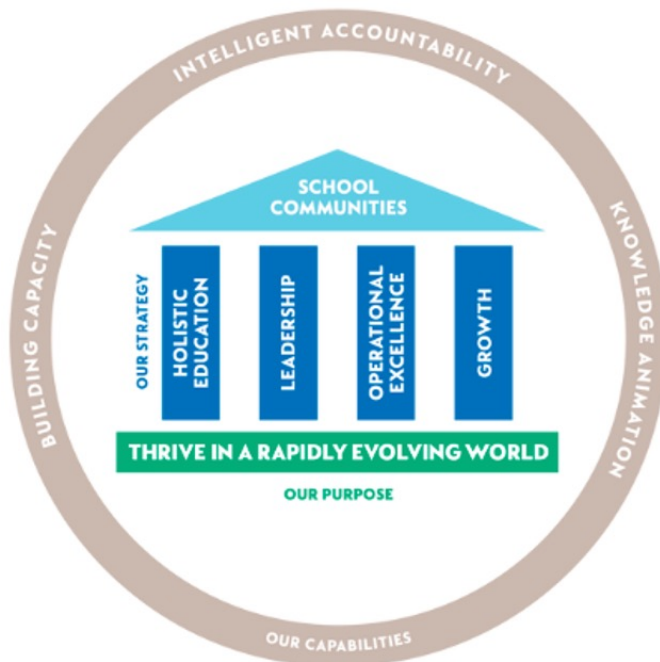
**Good luck with your application — we can't wait to see what you'll bring.**



## About Cognita

# A world of schools connected by a single purpose

At Cognita, we don't just provide education — we create environments where students, teachers, and colleagues can truly thrive. As part of our global family, you'll join a unique community that's dedicated to shaping the future of education. Our purpose is simple yet powerful: to empower every individual to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.



## Our Quality Framework

With the support of our Cognita Quality Framework, we ensure that every school maintains its unique identity while benefiting from shared best practices, knowledge, and a global commitment to excellence.

This framework is the golden thread that connects all our schools, helping us create world-class learning environments for everyone.

Every Cognita school is special to us, but we are united by our collective goals, passion for innovation, and commitment to progress. Together, we collaborate, embrace new challenges, and create meaningful change that benefits not only our schools but the communities around us.

**Ready to be part of something extraordinary? Explore the next page to understand the mindsets that empower us to thrive and help bring all this to life.**

# Building a strong culture for an evolving world

For our extraordinary community to fulfil our purpose, we rely on the strength of our culture. We thrive and our students thrive when we go forward together, progress by facing challenge, anticipate the future, and stay open to new ideas and ways of working.

## Our Mindsets:

Building a thriving culture isn't accidental—it's the result of intentional choices and actions we take every day.

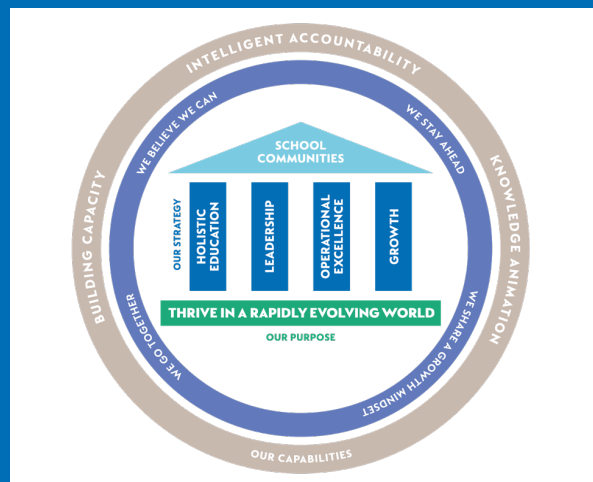
By living through our mindsets, we don't just shape the way we work—we build a culture that empowers us to drive purpose and create change so we can grow, succeed and make a lasting impact.

### We go together

We are stronger together, as one global schools system and operate with our collective goals in mind. We show up for one another, collaborate widely and share generously.

### We stay ahead

We embrace change to stay ahead, whilst maintaining high-standards and best practice. We anticipate the future, not afraid to do things differently, so both our students and our business thrive today and tomorrow.



### We share a growth mindset

We always consider the needs and perspectives of others. We are open to new ideas and ways of working, connecting to wider perspectives wherever possible.

### We believe we can

We are driven and passionate about what we do. Determined learners, we progress fast by facing challenges and empowering others to do the same. We take ownership of our responsibilities and always believe there is a way.

**Want to better understand the role you'll play and the impact you'll make with us? Have a look at the next page.**

# Our promise to you

# Discover purpose, create change with us

We are a diverse community, united by a shared purpose: **to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.**

We empower every school, teacher, colleague and student to focus on what they do best.

As a dynamic, committed team in 100 schools in 16 countries, we move fast but securely and progress while maintaining high standards. Find diversity, autonomy, and challenge to build a purposeful career with a variety of opportunities both upwards and sideways.

Join a welcoming, supportive network of talented people who are resilient and driven to achieve. Embrace change and innovate thoughtfully, take in fresh perspectives to achieve ambitious goals and create an inclusive, sustainable future in education. Striving for excellence and encouraging one another, make your mark

through intentional impact and creating meaningful change for children and our incredible school system.

Your voice matters in our collaborative, open environment. We show up for one another, care about everyone's well-being and value input from our whole school community. Our strength lies in our diverse and expansive collaboration, championing local ownership and creating opportunities through our differences.

Achieve more in a place that thinks ahead, is unafraid to do things differently, and welcomes new ideas. Create change, grow, care, and always find purpose in a place committed to helping you and everyone thrive.

**Find out what this means for your role on the following page...**

# Be the catalyst for educational transformation



Step into a transformative leadership role at Cognita, where your vision and drive will shape the future of our schools. Every action you take has a clear purpose: to inspire both staff and students to achieve their fullest potential. In this role, you will foster innovation, collaboration, and inclusion, creating a lasting impact and championing a shared mission of educational excellence.

**Discover purpose and create change with us.**

## **Thrive in an extraordinary community**

In our global community, collaboration and shared goals are central. You'll be part of a passionate network that supports and inspires each other. Together, we achieve more than we ever could alone, sharing generously and collaborating widely.

## **Create meaningful change every day**

Lead with a bold purpose and inspire transformative educational environments. At Cognita, you'll drive initiatives that promote inclusivity and diversity, making a profound difference in the lives of our students and staff. Your leadership will leave a legacy of progress and excellence.

## **Champion progress in education**

We stay ahead by embracing and role-modelling change, pushing the boundaries of what's possible in education. Your forward-thinking approach will set new standards for innovation, ensuring that our schools continue to thrive today and tomorrow.

## **Learn and develop from new challenges**

At Cognita, we embrace challenges with determination and optimism. In your role, you'll continually develop new skills and take ownership of your growth, while empowering others to do the same.

**Find out more about  
Downsend School on  
the next page...**



# DOWNSEND SCHOOL

*Inspiring Young Minds*





School Introduction

# Discover purpose, create change at Downsend School

## Welcome to our school

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Founded in 1898, Downsend has a rich history of delivering a truly holistic education and has always thrived on pushing the boundaries in every area of school life. There is an energy and a sense of purpose when you join Downsend, this is a school that works at a fast pace, has high expectations and is not afraid to do things differently. This leads to a sense of camaraderie and a shared purpose among staff that makes Downsend such a unique place to be. Located across four sites in

Ashted, Epsom and Leatherhead, and with a pupil roll of 815 students from the ages of 6 months to 16 years, Downsend proudly plays an important part in the local community.

With further change on the horizon, with a launch of a Sixth Form in September 2025, Downsend has an exciting future ahead.

## Our vision

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Academic excellence and achieving the very best for every child is at the heart of what we do, whilst never at the expense of providing and creating opportunities in all aspects of their lives. The pandemic was instrumental in shaping Downsend's 'Future Skills' vision and aims. Whilst informed by a deep body of research, it was also built on collective experiences gained during a time of rapid change and the very obvious need to equip our young people with more than just excellent academic outcomes, but to also ensure they understand their place in the world, both globally and locally, and how to be the kind of people that contribute to society meaningfully.

Our vision helps shape our priorities from Little Downsend through to the Senior School and has been instrumental in

building a collective purpose amongst staff, from our Sustainability strategy recognised by Eco-Schools and the RHS, achieving the UNIECF Rights Respecting accreditation, achieving Microsoft Showcase status and delivering innovative curriculum collapse events, trips, clubs and experiences for pupils day in and day out.

September 2025 will mark a truly momentous milestone in our history as Downsend Sixth is launched following a £5m investment. Downsend will then become the only 0–18 provider of independent education in the local area.

This is a remarkable time to join a remarkable school.

## Role overview

# What you'll be doing

## Role purpose

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To be an inspirational leader and custodian for students, colleagues and parents as the Head of a for-profit school within the Cognita group.

To ensure continuous improvement in all areas to deliver a 'Cognita Education' and the overall commercial success of the institution.

## Leadership

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- Sets the vision & direction for the school in alignment with the Cognita Quality Framework so colleagues, students and parents are inspired by the direction and ethos.
- Ensure a clear long-term strategic growth plan is written and delivered in conjunction with the leadership team (and potentially a wider stakeholder group).
- Create a positive and growth-minded culture to develop a conducive environment where staff love coming to work and students have an inspiring environment to learn in.
- Effectively communicate all aspects of the school to its community and the wider organisation.
- Engage with the global learning network within Cognita and ensure positive interactions with central/POD teams and colleagues from other schools.

## Holistic education

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- Ensure clarity of focus on safeguarding, academic achievement and personal development.
- Embed the Cognita Quality Framework: A3- Attitudes, Adaptability and Agency.
- Ensure a rigorous focus on pupils' achievement, using data and assessment tools to monitor pupil progress and challenge under-achievement with pupils and colleagues.
- Lead a successful preparation, application and transition program into the next phase of education for all students.
- Be accountable for all requirements regarding inspection and external reviews; ensuring that the School is fully compliant with all current requirements/policies.
- Be an advocate for student wellbeing and ensure the Cognita Be Well Charter is used as a key tool in student wellbeing.

## Operational excellence

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- Be accountable for the school finances including budgeting, planning, and forecasting ensuring full ownership of the school P&L.
- Oversee school infrastructure and resources in a commercially appropriate way.
- Knowledge of the company procedures, deadlines and limits of authority, and ensure the school adheres to them.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteer roles are clearly defined, understood and agreed; and that individuals are held to account.
- Recruit, retain and develop staff as leaders in order to build capacity for improvement.

## **Growth**

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- Take a leading role in the management of Student Retention and Admissions experience.
- Ensure the marketing of the school is in line with the direction/ethos that has been agreed.
- Recognise business opportunities & explore new avenues of growth, especially by attracting and retaining students.
- Ensure partnerships with parents to support and improve pupil achievement and wellbeing.
- Create partnerships within the local community to maintain the School's reputation.

## **People**

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- Recruit, retain and develop staff as leaders in order to build capacity.
- Ensure high engagement of staff.
- Be willing to tackle difficult issues.

## **Safeguarding and compliance**

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- Demonstrate a personal commitment to safeguarding, health & safety.
- Lead the school so that it is compliant and provides a safe learning environment for students and colleagues.
- Ensure full compliance with legislation, regulations, safeguarding policies, procedures and code of conduct.

## **Governance**

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- Governance Cognita is the proprietor of Downsend School. As such, Cognita has the legal responsibility and accountability for ensuring that the School is compliant, demonstrating the highest standard of pupil safety, quality of education and effectiveness in all areas of school life.
- Cognita schools do not have governing bodies. However, they all have strong and established governance arrangements and Heads are line managed by a Chair of Governors.
- Lead a school which is entirely compliant and provides a safe learning environment for students and staff ensuring full compliance with legislation, regulations, safeguarding policies, procedures and code of conduct.
- Safeguarding and Health & Safety governance visits are held at each school to evaluate their quality for protection for our children. During these visits, the reviewer will speak with the Head, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Educational Visits Coordinator and other staff, as well as always talking to groups of children.

## Role overview

# What you'll bring

## Person Specification

Essential	
Persona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A nice, personable and charismatic person who has professional gravitas (in and out of school)</li><li>• Understand the importance of 'frontline leadership'</li><li>• Embraces and manages diversity</li><li>• Understands why and how to build capacity</li></ul>
Skills/attributes /traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong leadership skills with integrity and a strong moral compass</li><li>• Has resilience but is willing to be open and learn</li><li>• Enjoys empowering others and nurturing talent</li><li>• Able and willing to have honest &amp; tough conversations with colleagues and parents.</li><li>• Ability to simplify the complex</li><li>• Strong people skills with the ability to build teams and the school community</li><li>• Excellent written and oral communication skills</li><li>• Manage competing priorities and meeting deadlines</li><li>• Able to develop and deliver strategic plans</li><li>• Be adaptable in order to engage effectively with parents, pupils and colleagues</li></ul>
Experience & knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate outstanding teaching practice</li><li>• Good commercial acumen</li><li>• Knowledge of safeguarding regulations and Independent Schools Standard &amp; Regulations</li><li>• Deep understanding of the curriculum</li><li>• Experience of delivering strong commercial and financial performance</li></ul>
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Degree in Education</li><li>• Relevant Educational qualification / qualified teacher status</li><li>• Masters in Education and/or leadership</li></ul>

## Benefits

# The benefits that will help you thrive

Our benefits are more than just perks—they're a reflection of our commitment to your growth, well-being, and success. Whether you're looking to expand your professional horizons or ensure a healthy balance between work and life, we offer a range of benefits designed to support you every step of the way.

### What you'll get:

#### Core benefits

- Competitive salary based on level and experience
- 25 days holiday
- Life assurance
- Pension scheme
- Flu vaccinations
- Employee assistance programme
- My StaffShop discounts
- Cycle to work scheme

#### Other benefits (specific to your role)

- Private medical
- Healthcare cash plan
- Discretionary bonus
- School fee discount
- A wide range of professional subscriptions

## Application Process

# Great, so what happens next?

### How to apply

We're excited to get to know you and learn more about your unique skills and experiences. To help us process your application smoothly, here are a few steps to guide you:

- Please submit a completed Cognita application form, along with a cover letter that highlights how your experience and skills align with the role. The cover letter should be no more than two sides of A4 and can be submitted in the specified languages.
- Feel free to include your CV, but please ensure it accompanies the completed application form.
- Submit your application via our applicant tracking system by following the apply now link on the advert. Be sure to submit it by the stated deadline so we can review your application as soon as possible.

We can't wait to meet you. Best of luck with your application, and we'll be in touch with the next steps soon.

### Safeguarding at Cognita

At Cognita Schools, we are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all staff, volunteers, and third parties to share this commitment. As part of our safer recruitment practices, pre-employment background checks will be conducted before any appointment is confirmed.

### Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I)

At Cognita, diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. As a global community spanning over 94 nationalities, we know that our strength lies in our diversity. It's what drives our success and makes Cognita a place where everyone can thrive.

#### We are committed to:

- Attracting, recruiting, and retaining diverse talent
- Embedding DE&I principles into every part of school life
- Fostering inclusive environments where all voices are heard and celebrated

No matter where you come from or what stage of your career journey you're on, you're welcome at Cognita.

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a red school jacket with black trim, a white shirt, and a striped tie, is sitting at a desk. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. In front of him is a black camera. To his left, there is a wooden sculpture of a horse. The background is a classroom with colorful posters on the wall.

**Discover purpose,  
create change.**

Your journey towards  
making a real difference  
starts here and we're  
excited to see how you'll  
make your mark.

Contact us at [recruitment@cognita.com](mailto:recruitment@cognita.com)  
and begin your journey today.

**COGNITA**