Dear Applicant,

Assistant Team Leader (Visual Arts)

I hope that the information which follows will help inform your decision about whether to make a formal application for this post.

Like most job applicants you will want to find out a bit more about us. These days there is a wealth of data about schools which you may wish to look at. Proud though we are of that data, such research never tells the whole story and you will only be sure that you want to work here when you get 'that feeling' within the first few minutes of walking through the door.

When you do your research, you'll find that our most recent OFSTED report graded the school as outstanding in every category inspected. We believe that this judgement was a reflection of the fact that Challoner's is genuinely a special place. Many people comment on the distinctive ethos and 'feel' of our school and I regard this as the best sort of compliment. Ethos is a difficult thing to capture on paper, but we have tried to encapsulate what makes the school special through the attached document 'Excellence with Integrity'. Our ethos is created by our students, who are intensely proud of coming to school here, and our teachers and support staff who love working at Challoner's. The relationship between staff and students is a very special one and we see ourselves running the school with the students rather than for them.

Despite its formidable academic record, Challoner's is no hothouse – it's a place of genuine creativity, fun and comradeship. In staff we appoint, we look for that much undervalued quality of humanity, along with an acceptance that young people will always make a few mistakes – and that it's our job to ensure that they learn from them. Two of the most immediately noticeable qualities of the people who work here are their humour and their sense of proportion. Even on the dullest of days, laughter pervades the school and reflects a genuine warmth and professional respect amongst colleagues. Sharing a laugh and a joke with the students is the norm and serves to brighten our daily work no end. One of the reasons our teachers are prepared to give up so much of their time to run educational visits (we do more than any school I know) and other extra-curricular activities is that spending time with our students is so rewarding and enjoyable.

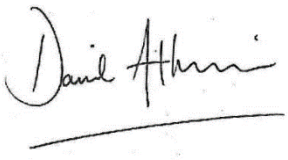
Over the years, schools have been subjected to a daily influx of policy changes and 'guidance' from government, much of it well-intentioned but unhelpful. I see it as an important part of my job to insulate staff from 'initiative overload' as much as possible so that they can direct their talents and energy into the things which we think are really important – ensuring that our students develop into confident learners who are at ease with themselves and others and willing to take responsible risks in their learning. We don't believe that just getting good GCSE and A Levels necessarily makes our students into good learners. Therefore we put a lot of thought and effort into how to make their time at school into a really worthwhile apprenticeship in the arts and crafts of learning which will stand the test of time, equipping them to make a success of whatever they choose to pursue in later life. Our Learning@Challoners framework has been carefully developed over the years to promote valuable 21st century transferable skills without compromising the high academic ambitions that characterise learning here. As you will find out, Challoner's is at the forefront of innovation and is therefore the very antithesis of some people's notion of a traditional grammar school. Our role as a SCITT and a lead school in a Teaching School Alliance has once again put us at the cutting edge and opened up a whole range of opportunities for our staff both within and beyond the school. We also have a large number of young teachers who provide a constant influx of fresh ideas and enthusiasm, along with older hands who add wisdom and experience to the mix but who aren't in any way tired or cynical. We believe that the next generation of leaders will be drawn both from among our staff and our students and we take our responsibility for their development very seriously. To keep our staff fresh, we have recently shortened the school year and moved to a two week Half Term break in October, so working at Challoner's now has many of the advantages of the independent sector!

You'll find a lot more information about the school on our website www.challoners.com (which we hope encapsulates that intangible 'feel' of the school) and about our Teaching School Alliance at www.astra-alliance.com. If you would like further clarification or just an informal chat with someone, please feel free to contact us by phone or email. I enclose some information about your subject at Challoner's along with some general information about the school, a Role Profile and a Person Specification. When I read your application, I will be trying to assess whether you would be a 'good fit' for our school, so I hope that some of the things I have said will be useful to you in writing your supporting statement.

I do hope that you will decide to make an application to join us and that we will have the chance to meet.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Mr D Atkinson
Headmaster