

SESSET

# Chief Operating Officer

CANDIDATE PACK  
2024



# About SESSET

## Overview

South East Surrey Schools Education Trust (SESSET) was formed by the Governing Bodies of three secondary schools: The Ashcombe in Dorking, Therfield School in Leatherhead and Carrington School in Redhill. It became operational on 1 January 2017 and has its Registered Office at The Ashcombe School.

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## Ethos

Our pride in the unique, individual ethos of each of our schools and our commitment to common values rooted in inclusivity and collaboration are enhanced and strengthened through the delegated structure of this partnership.

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## Structure

Each of the three secondary schools is led by a Headteacher and supported by a Business Manager who are responsible for the school and its operations, accountable to the school Governing Body and ultimately the Trustees. There is extensive collaboration across and between Business Managers, the Finance and Estates teams and Headteachers to help maximise services, financial resources and delivery of education to the students across the schools.

The Trustees are extremely supportive and bring a range of relevant expertise and experience to SESSET. They have developed strong working relationships with the Headteachers and school Governing Bodies.

The three secondary schools are all sought after and offer a wide-ranging curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities with excellent links to their local communities.

# A Message from the Executive Head

SESSET has been in operation for over seven years, and throughout that time there has been a steady development of the sharing and collaboration between the schools. Each of them contribute, and there have been visible benefits in, for example, the new build at Carrington and the new Drama Studio and Sports Hall at Therfield.

All the schools offer a warm and welcoming environment for students and staff, and that extends to the operation of SESSET as a whole and the links between the schools.

One of the distinctive features of SESSET is the level of delegation to each school, and the way that each Head is very clearly the Head of their school, responsible to its Governing Body.

We commissioned an external review of governance in Autumn Term 2022, which commended both the existing practice and



the desire "to strengthen the sense of being part of and contributing to the Trust."

My role is, whilst retaining overall accountability to the Trustees, to support and advise the Heads and other colleagues and ensure the effective running of SESSET. The new COO will play a vital role in this, and I am very much looking forward to working with the successful candidate.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DJ Blow". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

**David Blow**



# Job Profile – Chief Operating Officer

## Introduction

This is an exciting opportunity for a Chief Operating Officer to play a key long-term role in this highly regarded multi-academy trust. SESSET is an established, stable and well managed multi-academy trust. It comprises three secondary schools: The Ashcombe in Dorking, Therfield School in Leatherhead and Carrington School in Redhill. SESSET was formed in 2017 in the spirit of collaboration and autonomy and has a very devolved Scheme of Delegation, with the Governing Body and Head of each of the three secondary schools being responsible for the running of their school. It currently operates with a very small central team of an Executive Headteacher, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Chief Operating Officer (COO). The Headteachers and Business Managers in the three schools work closely with the central team.

Following an external review and discussions between Trustees and Governors about the strategic aims of SESSET and its schools, we are keen to further develop the collaborative working between the SESSET schools, provide additional resilience and capacity and look ahead to securing a stable and secure future through appropriate succession planning. One feature of the SESSET model with a high level of delegation is that the central team can offer capacity and skills to deal with specific things and where there may be a temporary gap / absence. We are also a small team and so a high degree of flexibility is needed. So, following the departure of the current Chief Financial Officer, the existing part-time COO will be assuming the role of CFO and will work closely with the new COO to ensure a smooth transition.

The role will be based at one of the schools, with an expectation that time is spent in the other two schools to ensure the development of strong working relationships and regular communication with key personnel. Flexible working for this broadly full-time post in terms of hours / week and weeks / year will be considered and there is the opportunity to work from home one day per week.

## Salary

SES 12 (£57,153 - £66,714) (2023-24 figures)

## Contract

Full time (or nearly full-time) permanent role

**Responsible to:** Executive Headteacher

## Who we are

- David Blow, Executive Headteacher, SESSET
- Lin McCormick, COO becoming CFO, SESSET
- COO, SESSET, to be appointed

Together they fulfil the statutory duties of a multi-academy trust.

Each of the three secondary schools is led by a Headteacher (Therfield School: James Malley, Carrington School: Kerry Oakley, Ashcombe School: Chris Panting) and supported by a Business Manager (Therfield School: Eleanor van Rooyen, Carrington School: Ellen Maden, Ashcombe School: Paula Stace) who are responsible for the school and its operations, accountable to the school governing body and ultimately the Trustees (Chair, Tim Poole and Vice Chair, Andrew Potterton).

The Trustees are extremely supportive and bring a range of relevant expertise and experience to SESSET. They have developed strong working relationships with the Headteachers and school governing bodies.

## What we offer

- Competitive salary
- 24 days holiday rising to 28 days
- Staff fitness suite at Ashcombe School
- Term time nursery at Ashcombe School with preferential rates for staff
- Free parking
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Flexible working

## What we are looking for

- A passion for working in an education setting and commitment to our vision
- Compelling personal qualities, an ability to form positive relationships with people, enthuse and inspire staff, and be an effective communicator
- Someone who responds constructively and thoughtfully to challenges and can think creatively and innovatively to solve problems
- Someone who is self-motivated and pro-active
- A capacity to think strategically with excellent organisational skills
- The confidence to make difficult decisions and an ability to reflect on them and re-consider situations with empathy, humility and warmth
- The skill to inspire confidence and lead with integrity
- A commitment to ethical leadership

# Key Responsibilities – Chief Operating Officer

## Overall operation and governance

Have oversight for overall operations within SESSET (noting the delegated model), ensuring long-term compliance with ESFA and other statutory guidance

Be a catalyst for driving improvements and efficiencies across the Trust:

### **Governance**

- As the Trust's Governance Professional, prepare agenda and papers for all SESSET Board and Audit & Risk Committee meetings
- Clerking for Board and Audit & Risk Committee meetings including Minutes
- Coordinate development, updates and renewal of SESSET policies
- Manage Trustee and Member appointments and induction process
- Maintain SESSET company registers and update Companies House and Get Information About Schools (GIAS) records
- Manage SESSET website and ensure content is up to date and compliant
- Obtain Declarations of Interests for SESSET personnel and maintain SESSET Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests

### **Audit & Risk**

- Prepare papers for and participate in the Audit and Risk Committee
- Contribute to SESSET's risk management activities, including identifying strategic and operational risks, taking steps to mitigate these risks
- Maintain and further develop an effective internal scrutiny (in collaboration with CFO) with a focus on risk for SESSET, making recommendations for improvement
- Develop, implement, monitor and review SESSET's policies and procedures (in collaboration with CFO) in accordance with the Academies Trust Handbook, enabling robust management whilst monitoring that all staff across SESSET adhere to these policies and procedures

## Reporting and compliance

Be accountable for ensuring that the Trust complies with its legal obligations, adheres to regulations, and submits accurate reports in a timely manner:

- Ensure returns (in coordination with CFO) as required by the Department for Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the Charities Commission and Companies House are submitted ahead of deadlines
- Prepare and submit SESSET's returns and reports, including for example gender pay gap reporting, apprenticeship data, Land and Buildings Collection Tool, and

## Companies House Confirmation Statement

- Lead on monitoring changes in legislation around operational matters, implementing changes and adapting processes as required
- Provide appropriate and timely reports to the Executive Headteacher and Trustees to support effective leadership and governance

## Leadership and management

Be accountable for supporting the effective management of SESSET and for providing motivational leadership at all levels of the organisation:

- Have oversight of SESSET's management systems, including managing user access, providing training, considering future system developments and generating reports
- Work with the HR Teams to provide support including managing SESSET's Skilled Worker Sponsor licence and Certificates of Sponsorship, and developing the use of the Apprenticeship Levy
- Work with Heads and Business Teams to support building and other funding projects
- Work with Heads and Business Teams on their planning and monitoring processes, including Integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning (ICFP)
- Respond proactively and flexibly to unexpected deadlines and events effecting the Trust, for example introduction and coordination of new MIS system or HR benefits package
- Develop effective relationships with SESSET's stakeholders and partners in order to support its development and operation
- Work with the SESSET Management Team to act as a representative for the Trust in external networks and forums, raising the profile of SESSET, engaging with the wider sector and ensuring that the Trust is alert to information, changes and wider opportunities that could affect its work

## Further Information

If you would like to know more about this role before applying, please contact David Blow, Executive Headteacher, [blow.david@sesset.org.uk](mailto:blow.david@sesset.org.uk) He is happy to call you and answer any questions you may have.

## How to Apply

Please go to TES and click the 'Quick apply' button on the vacancy to complete an application form.

The closing date for applications is **noon on Monday 4th March**. Candidates selected for interview will be informed by email.

We do not generally contact candidates who are not shortlisted. Whatever the outcome of your application we thank you for the interest you have shown and wish you well in your future career.

## Safeguarding

*SESSET is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any successful applicant will be required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure check by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).*

*We will also carry out an online search about you for information that is publicly available online. This will include social media accounts you may hold. This will only be carried out on shortlisted candidates and before interview. This processing of data will be conducted under the legal basis of Article 6e public task in line with guidance laid out in para 221 of Keeping Children in Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023. Any data collected during this search will be retained in line with our retention schedule which is available on request.*

**We hope this has given you an understanding of the key values of SESSET and why we believe it offers a challenging and rewarding opportunity**



**[www.sesset.org.uk](http://www.sesset.org.uk)**

# Person Specification

	Key Criteria	Essential/ Desirable
<b>Knowledge, Education and Training</b>	Educated to degree level, or equivalent, in an appropriate discipline	E
	A thorough knowledge of the education funding, regulatory and legislative frameworks	E
	Working knowledge of school finance processes, procedure and legislation	E
	Working knowledge of operational processes, including H&S	E
	Working knowledge of HR process, procedure and legislation	D
<b>Relevant Experience</b>	Leadership experience	E
	Experience of taking the lead in constructing and managing organisational budgets	D
	Experience of preparing effective and meaningful reports for a range of stakeholders including Board and management levels	E
	Experience of a school / education context	E
<b>Aptitude and Skills</b>	Excellent management and planning skills	E
	Ability to analyse issues and to interpret complex information and to offer sound, reliable professional advice	E
	Ability to think strategically and analytically with imagination and vision	E
	Demonstrate drive, energy, resilience, and the ability to motivate others	E
	Highly developed interpersonal skills including the ability to lead, communicate, present, negotiate and consult effectively	E
	Ability to challenge work of self & others constructively	E
	Ability to challenge the status quo and skilled in leading change management projects	E
	Be comfortable in dealing with complexity and uncertainty	E
	Be approachable, solution-focused and flexible	E
	Be able to work effectively under pressure, prioritising and delegating appropriately to meet deadlines	E