



SOMERHILL

Brief for the appointment of

HEAD

 ODGERS BERNDTSON

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BACKGROUND

Somerhill is a very special school with a unique offering: the 'best of both worlds', the 'ideal mix' and the 'place I always dreamt of finding' are the comments often made by parents or visitors.

With co-educational learning across the board until the end of pre-prep, Somerhill then offers single-sex class teaching until children leave for senior schools, whilst retaining co-educational instruction in sport and the co-curricular. This bespoke strategy allows for uninhibited learning for the older girls and boys with all the benefits of a co-educational setting.

Somerhill is set in a stunning 400-year-old Jacobean mansion surrounded by 150 acres of beautiful parkland just to the south of Tonbridge. It would be hard to find a more glorious setting for a school! The school is proud of its excellent facilities including a multi-purpose sports hall, astroturf, 25-metre indoor swimming pool and purpose-built music suite amongst others.

Somerhill is a mixed ability school with very bright and capable pupils; a significant number of pupils leave Somerhill to attend local grammar schools including Tonbridge Grammar School, The Judd School, and The Skinners' School. Typically over 20 pupils annually are awarded scholarships to the leading independent schools such as Tonbridge School, Sevenoaks School, Bede's, Eastbourne College, Caterham School, Walthamstow Hall School and Sutton Valence School at 11+/13+. Somerhill provides comprehensive support to those children that need it so they may attain their full potential, with approximately 40 such pupils currently receiving additional support.

A unique offering at Somerhill

The philosophy for the children at Somerhill is straightforward: happy children want to learn. Children are happy if they can play, participate widely and start to master skills of whatever kind, and the stunning setting and outstanding facilities offer endless opportunities for the children to find something that makes them smile.

Between the ages of 2 and 7 years old, girls and boys are together in the classroom. This environment promotes uninhibited development at an age when playing and learning are often synonymous. From 7 to 13 years old, children benefit from a single-sex classroom environment, where girls and boys learn in different and bespoke ways. The moment classes finish, everyone is together – at break and lunch as well as for sports, music, clubs and activities.



WE GROW AMAZING PEOPLE

Somerhill's vision of growing amazing people has, at its heart, the fundamental priority of delivering an outstanding educational experience for the pupils. Leading-edge facilities coupled with the very best educational practices, makes Somerhill the prep school of choice.

Somerhill stands today as a thriving school of around 600 pupils from 2-13 years old, yet it is not complacent about the future. To provide the children with the skills needed to succeed in the future the modern and dynamic curriculum ensures that pupils are as confident in the digital domain as in the natural world. Somerhill grows independent thinkers in whom the school fosters resilience, to become socially responsible people with a strong moral compass; individuals that are driven by strong values and a deep respect for each other. Somerhill strives to give its pupils the confidence and skills to manage in an ever-changing world.

Somerhill is, above all, a warm, happy and safe place for children to explore and learn. The pupils' pastoral care and well-being are key priorities along with a broad and balanced education. This approach builds robust foundations, ensuring they leave Somerhill with a growth mindset and a strong attitude to learning, ready to embrace future challenges as amazing people.



History

Somerhill is unique in that it is the product of three individual schools coming together on one beautiful and historic site. Yardley Court was a school for boys founded in 1898 in Tonbridge, which moved to Somerhill in 1990 to accommodate its expansion and meet growing demand. Derwent Lodge, a school for girls established in the 1930s in Tunbridge Wells, relocated to Somerhill in 1993, as their former home could no longer support the school's growing roll. Shortly after this, Somerhill Pre-Prep was founded in 1995 to complete the educational offering.



These three schools operated independently as 'The Schools at Somerhill' until 2018 when the Senior Leadership Team and the governors recognised the opportunity to unify them into the vibrant community that exists today, with shared facilities, a common vision, and a collective purpose.

Pre-school

The pre-school at Somerhill consists of Nursery, Kindergarten and Saplings. Children can join the pre-school from 2 years old when they start their Somerhill adventure.

As children develop at different rates and at different times, individual needs are carefully considered. Somerhill ensures that children feel safe and secure, inspiring them to be inquisitive about the world and to communicate fluently with others.

In pre-school, parents can choose from a hybrid model of indoor and outdoor sessions. Complementing the classroom and making the most of the stunning grounds, Saplings is the outdoor learning provision

based on the principles of Forest School. Sessions take place throughout the children's time in Nursery and Kindergarten in a dedicated outdoor woodland area.

Pre-prep

Somerhill's Pre-prep provides a nurturing, co-educational environment for children aged 4 to 7, fostering a love for learning from the very start. With a strong emphasis on well-being, Somerhill believes that children thrive academically when they are happy and engaged. From the outset, the school is committed to delivering outstanding academic excellence, ensuring a strong foundation for future success.

The wonderful indoor and outdoor environments at Somerhill nurture the children's curiosity and imagination, and the creative curriculum helps each child achieve their individual potential and move forward as a confident, resilient learner.

Pupil numbers across the pre-school and pre-prep are robust with strong future admissions forecast for September 2025.





Prep

In Somerhill's prep years (girls 7 to 11 and boys 7 to 13) co-education and single-sex classroom learning meet in perfect harmony. The school believes that prep aged pupils benefit from being separate for some aspects of their learning and together for others. With boys and girls learning and developing differently at this age, a classroom setting in which they can be uninhibited and where the teaching is tailored to them is of enormous educational and personal benefit.

At the same time, Somerhill recognises that it is valuable and enjoyable for children's social development to be part of a mixed school community. Therefore, girls and boys come together for break times, assemblies, and co-curricular activities, fostering a vibrant and inclusive school community where friendships flourish across all year groups.

The curriculum and calendar of activities offer children an all-round education in inspiring surroundings. Pupils have the perfect balance of creative, academic and physical opportunities in a space that allows them to build self-esteem and develop resilience and emotional intelligence.

Through innovative teaching and small class sizes, staff can focus on the individual, fostering happiness and nurturing a passion for learning.

Academic

The Somerhill curriculum is about developing a curious, confident attitude through skills-based learning. The diverse curriculum blends academic excellence with essential life skills, ensuring pupils are well-prepared for future challenges. Rooted in the school's values, it nurtures personal, social, and cultural development, fostering well-rounded, confident individuals.

All pupils are encouraged, recognised, and celebrated for their achievements. Somerhill is committed to enriching pupils' education through dynamic and relevant experiences that cultivate essential skills for the future. Introducing engineering from Year 3 is just one example of how the school fosters curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving from an early age. Somerhill pupils move seamlessly between outdoor and indoor learning, so do not be surprised if you see children with muddy knees in class and wellies lining the corridors!

The younger children learn through the creative curriculum from Nursery to Year 2, and from Year 3 to 8 pupils follow the Pre-Senior Bacculaureate (PSB).

Pre-Senior Bacculaureate (PSB)

Somerhill is proud to be a flagship school for the PSB programme. The PSB is about challenging perceptions of school and developing a love of learning. This is best achieved by children developing

a clear understanding of their skills and their areas for development.

The PSB assessment framework focuses on six key areas: leadership, collaboration, independence, thinking and learning, reviewing and improving, and communication. By focusing on these core skills, children are best equipped to deal with the challenges and opportunities of senior school life and beyond.

The PSB, with its focus on building a full range of skills, reflects Somerhill's vision for how children are educated.

Pastoral

Somerhill approaches the welfare of pupils in a positive way, and all staff reinforce the Somerhill philosophy and ethos. Somerhill children are happy, secure and look forward to coming to school each day.

The children feel able to talk freely and openly to any staff member if they have any worries or problems of any kind. Staff respond appropriately to children, offering advice, support, guidance and reassurance. Somerhill shapes a pastoral support programme for individual children, where necessary, to manage their needs. There is also a trained school counsellor available to work with pupils during the school day.

All staff, from the Senior Leadership Team to class teachers, SENCOs, and non-teaching staff, are invested in the outstanding pastoral care at Somerhill.

Co-curricular activities

Somerhill's co-curricular activities are integral to the school curriculum, complementing and strengthening the academic offering.

Sport

Sport is an integral part of life at Somerhill with pupils engaged in physical activity and making the most of the outstanding sports facilities for over 6 timetabled hours a week.

With nearly 700 fixtures in football, rugby, cricket, netball, hockey, cross country, swimming, athletics and tennis, Somerhill is very proud of its sporting offer, in terms of achievement but also in terms of participation. It is the aim of the PE and Games department to provide every pupil with enjoyable sporting experiences at an appropriate level whilst encouraging their physical development and promoting the importance of exercise.

The Arts

Somerhill has thriving music, art and drama departments. Music is an essential part of life at Somerhill, and all pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of musical activities. Music forms part of the curriculum from pre-school and specialist teaching helps develop these skills and a love of music as pupils move through the school. There are also a wide range of orchestras and ensembles for pupils to take part in.

Art is an integral part of the Somerhill curriculum and pupils' efforts are wonderfully showcased in the annual whole school Art Exhibition which takes place during the summer term. The school extends the reach of its art department to parents by hosting 'The Big Draw' workshops annually for families on a Saturday and incorporates modern 'Art in Science' projects for older pupils.

Drama is enjoyed by pupils across the school from the 'standing room only' Kindergarten Nativity to the Year 8's comedic take on putting on a school play. Every year group, other than Nursery, has the opportunity to perform for parents and peers, showcasing their talents and growing confidence.

Extra-curricular and clubs

Somerhill's extensive range of extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs further enhance the classroom learning. Somerhill's unique setting allows for endless opportunities, and the diverse and expansive site is exploited during break times, lunch times, during lessons, and after-school clubs.

Despite its size, extra-curricular activities are not limited to the Somerhill estate; there are multiple trips and off-site adventures taking place every week.



Further information on Somerhill can be found via the school's website:
www.somerhill.org

THE ROLE

The Governors are now seeking an exceptional and visionary school leader to be the next Head of Somerhill. The Head will provide inspirational, clear and ambitious leadership, able to articulate and implement a compelling strategy for Somerhill for the years to come. They will work effectively in collaboration with a supportive board of governors and dedicated staff body, and will both build upon Somerhill's many existing strengths and further develop the school's competitive market position in a challenging time for the independent school sector. Most importantly, they will deliver excellence in line with the values, ethos and community of Somerhill.

Accountability

The Head is appointed by the Governors and is responsible to them through the Chair of Governors.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Vision

- Develop and articulate a contemporary and compelling vision for the future of the school and its wider community, in consultation with the Governors.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan that clearly encapsulates how to deliver the school's vision, whilst being grounded in practical and commercial realities.
- Clearly articulate the aims and ethos of the school and secure and encourage the commitment of all staff, pupils, parents and, where appropriate, the wider community, to the vision and overall direction of the school.
- Be aware of, and proactively respond to, strategic considerations posed by the needs of the highly competitive local and wider marketplace, adapting plans and strategies in an agile manner, as necessary.

- Act as the visible and accessible figurehead of the school, promoting it energetically and effectively so that it is the school of first choice for parents and their children
- Develop a commercial strategy for the effective utilisation of Somerhill's physical assets to generate streams of non-fee related income.

Leadership and Management

- Provide inspiring, effective and visible leadership to all staff within the school, fostering a strong commitment to the ethos and values of Somerhill, engaging and motivating colleagues and building a strong sense of community and inclusivity as a 'whole school' staff team.
- Further develop a strong, cohesive and proactive Senior Leadership Team ensuring that roles, responsibilities and expectations are clear and that the highest standards of performance are expected and delivered.

- Take an open, collaborative and trusting approach to leadership, empowering senior colleagues to drive the successful operational and academic functioning of the school through a culture of encouragement and support.
- Recruit and retain staff of the highest quality with the ability to act as role models, inspire pupils and develop the reputation of the school.
- Build a culture of continual professional development and take a long-term view of staffing, planning effectively for progression and succession.



Educational Leadership

- Maintain an environment that promotes world-class teaching and stimulating, exciting and effective learning.
- Maintain a vibrant learning environment that promotes innovation to ensure that Somerhill continues to strive for a fresh and relevant approach.
- Oversee the continual development of an ambitious and forward-looking curriculum and learning environment, identify and evaluate educational initiatives, and innovate when and where appropriate.
- Design, organise and implement the programme and policy for whole school pastoral care to ensure that wellbeing and the happiness of the children are central to the aims of the school.
- Support and develop the programme of extra-curricular activities that provides an enriching and diverse range of opportunities, including sport, drama, music, and the arts.
- Maintain and monitor an environment that promotes and safeguards the welfare of pupils as the top priority.

Marketing, Admissions and Community

- Ensure highly effective marketing and admissions strategies are in place that maintain and develop strong relationships with feeder nurseries, local schools and with both current and prospective parents.
- Act as a figurehead and be personally visible and involved in the full range of school events and activities.
- Promote and build the reputation of the school to all stakeholders, in particular parents (current and prospective), and create a brand and identity for the school that is appealing to all those that desire an independent education for their children.
- Maintain a detailed understanding of the selection and admissions processes at 11+ and 13+ and good relationships with heads and other key individuals in relevant senior schools, to support and advise parents and pupils in their transfer to senior school.

- Develop strong and meaningful relationships with all members of the Somerhill community including alumni, past parents and friends of the school.

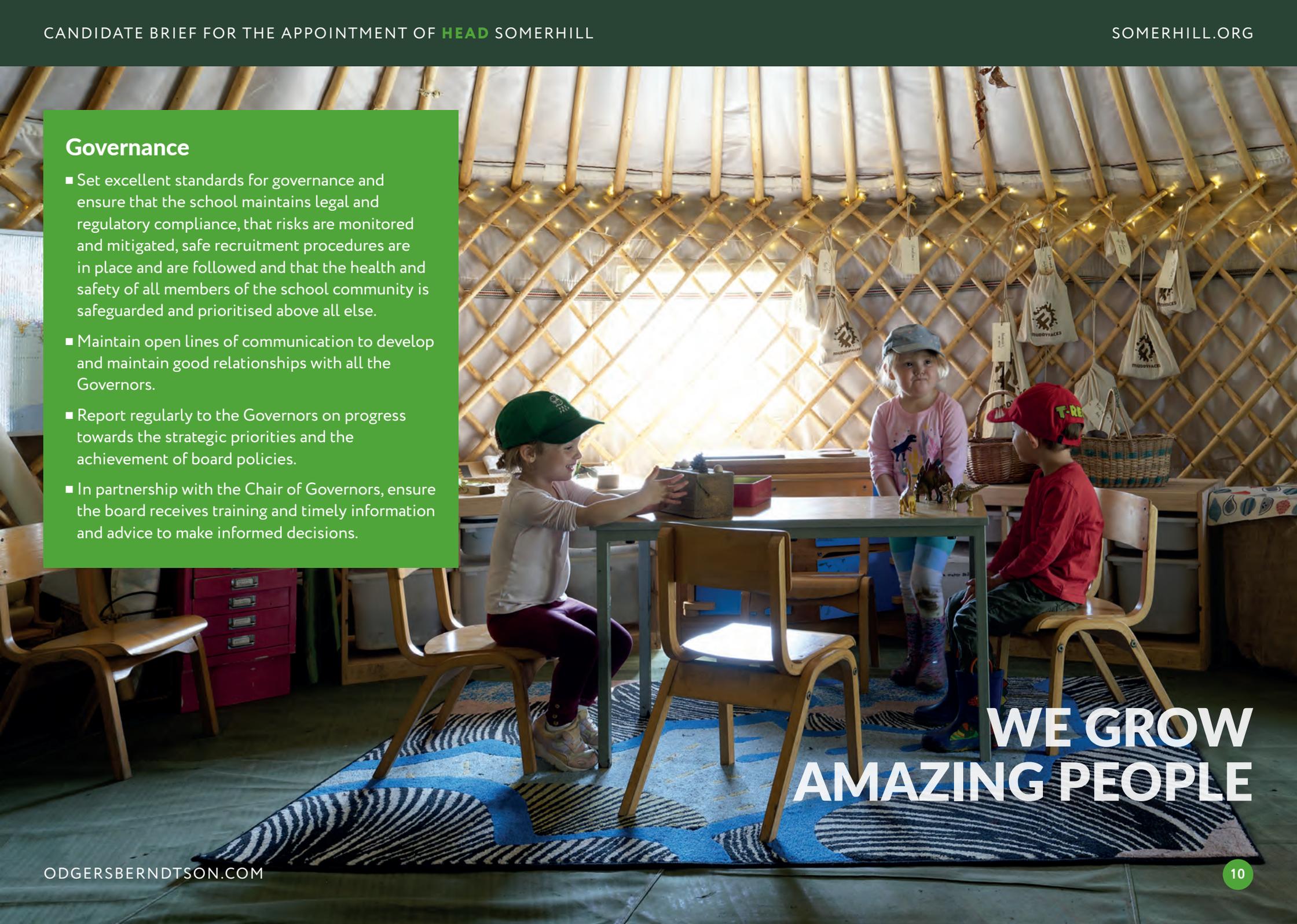
Finance and Operations

- Ensure that significant financial and management decisions are carried out in consultation with the Governors and in accordance with delegated authorities.
- Work with the Bursar and other members of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure the appropriate deployment and management of all resources (financial, human and physical) across the school in support of the overall vision and plans.
- Ensure an effective administrative and support structure is in place and that operational matters are dealt with efficiently, and compliantly, to improve the quality of learning and teaching at the school.
- In collaboration with the Bursar and the Governors, prioritise and plan capital expenditure linked to the school's strategic aims and overall vision.



Governance

- Set excellent standards for governance and ensure that the school maintains legal and regulatory compliance, that risks are monitored and mitigated, safe recruitment procedures are in place and are followed and that the health and safety of all members of the school community is safeguarded and prioritised above all else.
- Maintain open lines of communication to develop and maintain good relationships with all the Governors.
- Report regularly to the Governors on progress towards the strategic priorities and the achievement of board policies.
- In partnership with the Chair of Governors, ensure the board receives training and timely information and advice to make informed decisions.

A photograph of three children sitting around a small wooden table inside a yurt. The child on the left is wearing a green cap and a white shirt, reaching towards a box on the table. The child in the middle is wearing a pink shirt and a blue cap, looking towards the camera. The child on the right is wearing a red shirt and a red cap, looking towards the other children. The yurt has a wooden lattice wall and string lights. There are baskets and toys on the table and shelves in the background.

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THE PERSON

The next Head of Somerhill will inspire a vibrant and engaged school community through the delivery of a contemporary and compelling vision which will unite staff, parents and children, allowing them to embrace change and innovation collectively as the school strives for excellence across all areas.

The next Head will be a first-class communicator, able to inspire pupils, staff and parents alike and nurture strong relationships across a large school community.

As well as demonstrating operational excellence, the next Head will be highly strategically competent with an ability to be able articulate and implement a vision for Somerhill over the coming years. Whilst maintaining the delivery of an outstanding educational product, they will also be commercially minded, with an ability to shape a commercial strategy for the school.

The successful candidate will have the following qualifications, experience and attributes:

Qualifications and Experience

- University degree with additional management and leadership qualifications as an advantage.
- Leadership and management experience gained at Head level in a leading school, and demonstrable experience of working closely and collaboratively with a Board of Governors to deliver change effectively.

- An inspiring educator with experience of leading curriculum developments and teaching techniques which embrace innovation and creativity and instil the skills required to meet the demands of an everchanging world.
- In-depth understanding of the 3 to 13 age group, the competitive nature of senior school environments and of the current opportunities and challenges in the independent school sector both regionally and nationally.

- Experience of designing, implementing, and evaluating strategic plans in support of the overall vision, values, and ethos of a school.
- Experience of overseeing the full range of staff, leadership and management functions e.g. recruitment, continuing professional development, retention and performance management.
- Experience of overseeing strategic financial and resource management (human, virtual and physical).





Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Ability to design and articulate a contemporary and compelling vision and translate it into meaningful strategic objectives, grounded in practical reality.
- Ability to delegate, empower and devolve responsibility to staff and in doing so build capability and capacity.
- First-class communicator (both orally and in writing) with the capacity and confidence to persuade a range of audiences.
- Excellent decision-making and problem-solving ability including evidence of having dealt successfully with a range of challenges.

- Excellent digital skills with an understanding of the increasingly prominent role technology has to play in education.
- Proven skills in strategic financial and resource planning with the knowledge required to know which questions to ask of others and when.

Personal Attributes

- Genuinely strategic and forward-looking.
- Ambitious leader with the personal presence and gravitas needed to inspire and motivate others.
- Well-developed commercial instincts with the ability to spot and capitalise upon opportunities.

- A selfless, empowering and collaborative approach to leadership and management, building trust, inspiring confidence and creating capacity in others.
- Approachable, highly visible and accessible, regarded by others as being at the centre of school community.
- Outward-facing and engaging; able to present with confidence and self-belief in front of pupils, staff, parents, and other external audiences.
- A role model for both pupils and staff with an inherent desire to prepare the pupils for the demands of an ever-changing world.

- Pupil-centric with a strong commitment to the academic, social and emotional development of the pupils, with a natural empathy and affinity with them and desire to prioritise their happiness and wellbeing.
- Willingness to embrace change and seek ways to innovate.
- Community-orientated with a commitment to make a positive impact upon society.
- Naturally collaborative with a desire to work closely with others to deliver overall aims.
- Excellent judgement and integrity and sense of fairness.

HOW TO APPLY

The search for a new Head at Somerhill is being led by Odgers Berndtson and the new postholder will be selected by a committee chaired by the Chair of Governors.

The closing date for applications is Monday 24 March at 09.00.

Long list interviews will take place w/c 31 March. Short list interviews with the selection committee will take place on **Friday 11 April**. Finalist candidates will have the opportunity to visit Somerhill to meet with staff and governors **during 28, 29 and 30 April**. Final interviews will take place on **Friday 2 May**.

To apply, please submit a comprehensive CV along with a covering letter which sets out your interest in the role and encapsulates the aspects of your experience relevant to the required criteria. Please include current salary details and the names and addresses of three referees. Referees will not be approached until the final stages and not without prior permission from candidates.

The preferred method of application is online at: www.odgers.com/93227

All applications will receive an automated response.

For an initial discussion about the opportunity, please contact **Peter Lawrence and Harry Ford**:

Peter Lawrence: +44 (0) 207 529 3055
peter.lawrence@odgersberndtson.com

Harry Ford: +44 (0) 207 529 1013
harry.ford@odgersberndtson.com

Personal data

In line with GDPR, we ask that you do NOT send us any information that can identify children or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and/or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data in your CV/ application documentation will be understood by us as your expressed consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

Somerhill is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Applicants will be required to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

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