



HEAD | WESTONBIRT SCHOOL

— CANDIDATE INFORMATION —



ODGERS BERNDTSON

BACKGROUND

Westonbirt School is a co-educational independent boarding and day school that provides an outstanding education for approximately 780 pupils aged 2 to 18 years. Located within 210 acres of stunning Cotswolds parkland, the school is housed in the historic Westonbirt House, a Victorian mansion with a rich heritage.

Westonbirt was recently voted 'Co-educational Independent School of the Year' at the 2023 Independent School of the Year awards – an incredible achievement for a school that has only been co-educational since 2019.

Westonbirt is also included in the Fortune 'World's Leading Boarding Schools' 2023 report and was one of a handful of schools to achieve their highest five-star review.

In May 2018, Westonbirt joined Wishford Schools, a group of high-performing schools in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Kent. Wishford's support and investment has enabled Westonbirt's leadership team to pursue their ambitious plans for the growth and development of provision and facilities. Schools work closely with the group's senior leaders to define strategy and then enjoy the autonomy to run their schools, while benefiting from the support that membership of the group brings.

The school has been through an extraordinary period of growth and development over the past five years, more than doubling in size and completing a hugely successful transition to co-education. Pupil numbers now stand at approximately 500 in the Senior School and 280 in the Prep School and Nursery. A site development master plan is underway, which has seen major investment in creating exciting teaching spaces, world-class boarding accommodation, and a sports campus.

Organisationally, the school comprises Westonbirt Prep (ages 2-11) and Westonbirt School (ages 11-18). The Senior School has its main intake at Year 7 (now a 50:50 boy:girl split), drawing from local prep and primary schools, and there are additional intakes at Years 9 and 12. Boarding is at the heart of both

the school's history and its vision for the future, and the resident community forms an important part of school life.

The school's philosophy, "Inspiring young minds," ensures that pupils build skills, knowledge, and a love of learning that will serve them throughout their education. The school was rated 'Excellent' in all areas by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in May 2019 and received a positive report in its first inspection under the new ISI framework in November 2023.

NURSERY AND PREP SCHOOL

Westonbirt Nursery caters to children aged 2 years up to pre-school, offering a nurturing and dynamic environment where children's happiness and well-being are paramount. Nestled in a scenic, rural location, the nursery maximises the use of outdoor space, integrating nature and exploration into everyday activities.

The nursery follows the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, with a strong focus on play-based learning. Children build foundational skills in numeracy, literacy, and language, and develop a greater sense of independence and confidence, along with essential life skills. Westonbirt Nursery's ethos revolves around the values of Curiosity, Creativity, and Courage, which are woven into all aspects of the school experience. These principles ensure that children are well-equipped for the transition to the next stage of their educational journey.

At age 4, children transition into the Prep School, which offers an exciting educational experience based on a lively and ambitious curriculum. Learning is experiential and hands-on and, with a high staff-to-child ratio, personalised guidance is a key feature, ensuring that each child receives the support and challenge they need. The school boasts outstanding facilities, including specialist spaces for STEM, Art, Technology, Music, and Sport.

SENIOR SCHOOL

Pupils join the Senior School at the age of 11 and immediately benefit from small class sizes and a nurturing approach to teaching and learning. The Senior School offers a broad curriculum complemented by Saturday morning activities, which are attended by boarders and day pupils alike.

Exam results are on a positive upward trend, and in 2024, 31% of GCSE grades were 9-7, and 47% of A-level and BTEC grades were A*-A. Over 90% of students are accepted by their first-choice university, with offers from Bristol, Exeter, Durham, Nottingham, and other Russell Group universities, to name a few. The school provides additional support for students with additional needs and those aiming for Oxbridge or specialist degrees, such as Medicine. The vibrant international community also receives dedicated EAL support.

SIXTH FORM

Many Year 11s choose to progress to the Sixth Form and are joined by additional pupils from local state, independent, and grammar schools, as well as boarding students from across the globe. The Sixth Form provides the perfect stepping stone to university living; Sixth Form students enjoy communal Sixth Form study and social spaces, a Sixth Form café and bar, and access to the leisure centre, fitness suite, and 9-hole golf course. Year 13 boarders stay in 'Holford,' the offsite boarding house, which provides additional benefits of independence and preparation for university. Each student benefits from a university-style study room, with Sixth Form boarders enjoying study bedrooms. This is complemented by a variety of dedicated Sixth Form study and communal spaces.



CO-CURRICULAR

The co-curricular programme is the beating heart of life at Westonbirt, and there is a broad and diverse range of clubs, societies, and activities available, which range from sport, music, and drama, to debating, enterprise, and CCF. All pupils benefit from the excellent facilities and stunning site that Westonbirt has to offer; the school enjoys an enviable reputation for producing highly successful individual and team performances, often punching above its weight against the larger schools.

The school's major competitive sports are rugby, lacrosse, netball, swimming, tennis, athletics, and cricket. In addition, the school boasts an impressive equestrian team. Fixtures are played throughout the academic year against other independent and local schools, and many students compete at county, regional, national, and international levels.

A range of Physical Education activities are also offered through the curriculum with GCSE PE and BTEC Sports.

Music plays an active part in the life of Westonbirt School and over two-thirds of students play a musical instrument, as well as participating in one of several choirs and ensemble bands, including the outstanding Chamber Choir who have performed at Gloucester Cathedral. Musicals, drama productions, and dance performances are frequently staged in the Orangery, the Great Hall, or within the natural amphitheatre in the grounds, and students have taken productions to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Recent shows have included Secret Garden, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Lion King, and Les Misérables.



BOARDING

Westonbirt boasts a vibrant boarding community and is keen to grow the number of full boarders from the UK and a wide variety of countries. The school offers full, weekly, and flexi boarding options, complemented by extensive evening and weekend activities. Westonbirt recently opened two stunning new boarding Houses – a home-from-home Junior House for Years 6-8 and a stand-alone House for Year 13, which prepares the boarders for independent living.

Each house is managed by a House Parent, ensuring personalised pastoral care that is central to school life. Pupils' health, well-being, and safety are paramount, with the Health and Wellbeing Centre offering round-the-clock medical care, including access to doctors, counsellors, and a physiotherapist.

Further information on Westonbirt School can be found at: www.westonbirt.org

WISHFORD EDUCATION

Westonbirt is a member of the Wishford Education group, a collection of independent schools and nurseries located across southern England. Benefiting from the support of being part of a larger group, each school has its own individual and unique character, ranging from rural stately homes in Gloucestershire to a townhouse in Tunbridge Wells. All Wishford schools share a commitment to providing high-quality education, fostering a nurturing environment, and offering a wide range of opportunities for students, underpinned by individualised learning, strong community values, and innovative teaching methods to ensure that every child can achieve their full potential.

Further information on Wishford Education can be found at: www.wishford.co.uk



THE ROLE

The successful candidate will lead the Executive Team, comprising the Head of Prep School, Deputy Head (Academic), Deputy Head (Pastoral), Director of Admissions & Marketing, Director of Estates & Services, and Finance Director.

The key skills and characteristics sought are:

- A clear educational vision consistent with the Westonbirt ethos and character;
- Very high standards and expectations in all areas of educational provision and customer service;
- Excellent interpersonal, communication, and team-building skills;
- A natural leader, who can engage and motivate the whole school community as the school works through its major development project;
- Strong commercial instincts, to lead the further growth and development of the school;
- Resilience, adaptability, and a good sense of humour.

The Head is responsible to the Executive Chairman for the leadership and day-to-day management of the school.

STRATEGY & LEADERSHIP

- Lead the school with courage, confidence, and integrity.
- Work closely with the Executive Chairman and Executive Team to define and deliver an ambitious and market-leading strategy.
- Be the public face of Westonbirt, both within the school and in the wider community, personifying the school's ethos and values, and taking every opportunity to raise the school's profile.
- Oversee the School Development Plan, reviewing regularly to ensure suitable plans are in place to deliver the agreed objectives.
- Devise and implement an exciting vision to deliver significant growth in boarding numbers by creating a market-leading provision.
- Grow and develop the leadership team, structure, and capability, to ensure the school functions as a highly effective organisation.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across the Wishford group to maximise the benefits to the school of group membership.
- Grow and develop professional networks, being a visible ambassador for Westonbirt.
- Maintain a good understanding of trends and developments in educational theory and practice and contribute to current educational thinking.
- Maintain a thorough understanding of the educational and compliance requirements of the Independent School Standards.
- Build and develop the school's leadership team, ensuring appropriate delegation and continuing professional development.
- Ensure the school is managed in accordance with the agreed budget for each academic year.



CURRICULUM

- Ensure the school's programmes of study are creative, inspirational, and innovative, cater for pupils of all abilities, and satisfy regulatory requirements.
- Support the Deputy Head (Academic) in setting ambitious targets for academic progress and achievement, and ensure teaching staff have the support, encouragement, environment, and facilities required to consistently deliver high-quality lessons, with a pedagogical approach that ensures students achieve their potential.
- Ensure the school provides a breadth of extra-curricular activities, sports, and leadership opportunities, including devising and implementing an attractive weekend programme that meets the needs of both day and boarding pupils.

PASTORAL & BOARDING

- Foster the all-round development and pastoral welfare of all pupils, maintaining a safe and positive culture within the school.
- Set high standards and expectations for colleagues and pupils, supported by robust systems for pastoral support and oversight.
- Review the House and Tutor systems to ensure they are fit for purpose as the school continues to grow and develop.
- Ensure the school provides a happy, nurturing, and supportive environment in which all pupils can thrive.



PREP

- Support the Head of Prep to deliver the Prep School Development Plan.
- Ensure a close alignment and relationship between Prep and Senior to maximise the opportunity for retention of pupils as they move through the school.

ADMISSIONS & MARKETING

- Actively participate in the school's admissions and marketing activity, taking the leading role in ensuring annual recruitment and retention targets are achieved.
- Ensure the highest level of customer service is provided to all current and prospective parents from their first point of contact with the school.
- Establish strong relationships with feeder schools, visiting and communicating with existing and potential feeders regularly, attending events and activities.

- Represent the school on recruitment trips within the UK and internationally, working closely with agents and feeder schools to present the benefits of a Westonbirt education.
- Work closely with the Summer School, Holiday Club, and Commercial teams to identify opportunities to promote the school and generate enquiries.

STAFFING

- Lead and manage the senior team and all teaching and support staff.
- Recruit, motivate, and deploy staff effectively, ensuring the highest quality of teaching and customer service.
- Maintain a thorough performance management programme to ensure the quality of provision and that staff reach their potential.
- Work closely with the Finance team to ensure suitable staffing levels.



COMPLIANCE

- Ensure that safeguarding the children in our care is at the heart of the school's ethos and that all staff are committed to the principles and practices set out in the Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensure the school is compliant with regulations and foster a culture of awareness of and compliance with regulations.
- Ensure the school is well prepared for inspection at all times.

GENERAL

- Promote the school, recruiting and retaining pupils and staff by ensuring the delivery of excellence in all areas and building on the school's high profile within the local community.
- Maintain a culture of customer service, building a strong relationship with the parent body and ensuring that all staff understand the school's high standards for communication and service.
- Protect and promote the ethos and character of the school; acting at all times as an ambassador for the school and its values.
- Work with the other Heads in the Wishford Education group and the Advisory Board to exchange ideas and best practice.
- Provide the Board with such information and regular reports as they may request.



THE PERSON

The successful candidate will have the following skills and qualities:

- A confident, assured leadership style with excellent communication skills, enabling strong, productive relationships to be built with pupils, parents, and staff.
- Ambition, energy, and enthusiasm to build on the school's successes.
- Drive and determination to achieve the best for every child within the school community in line with the school's ethos.
- Excellent marketing skills and a confident social presence with the ability to interact confidently with parents, feeder schools, and the wider community, including press and other media.
- Ability to think strategically, preparing and implementing plans to ensure the continuous development of the school and its offering.

- Strong management skills, including the setting of clear goals, effective delegation and time management, and an understanding of the importance of performance management.
- An entrepreneurial spirit and solid understanding of the business and financial aspects of school management.
- The ability to play a significant role in the local community, building the school's profile locally and nationally.

The successful candidate will have the following experience:

- Educated to degree level with qualified teacher status and a track record of leadership success.
- Significant knowledge and experience of a successful boarding environment.



HOW TO APPLY

Westonbirt School has engaged the services of Odgers Berndtson to assist with the recruitment of the next Head.

Letters of application, CVs and completed application forms should be submitted online (preferred) at: www.odgers.com/92720

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 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 will be understood by us as your express 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.

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. This can be found at the end of the application process. Any information collated from the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

For an initial discussion, please contact:

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The closing date for applications is **09.00 GMT Friday 7 February**.

Shortlist interviews with the Selection Panel will take place on Monday 24 February. Candidates invited to the final stage will be invited to have briefing visits to the school ahead of a final interview which will take place on Thursday 6 March.

Westonbirt School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful applicant will be required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure check by the Disclosure and Barring Service.



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