



Lady Barn House School

Forward thinking since 1873

Appointment of Head

For September 2021 / January 2022

BRIEFING FOR CANDIDATES





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Simon Shneerson is assisting Lady Barn with this appointment and will be delighted to discuss the vacancy with you and to answer any questions.

A journey of discovery, opportunity and success

Key Dates

19th January at 11am	Closing date
w/c 25th January	Long list candidates notified
28th - 29th January	First interviews - Zoom

The final stage will be built around candidates and any Covid restrictions in force at the time.

We currently envisage:

4th - 10th February	Candidates visit the School for one day on dates to be individually agreed
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February 11th	Final interviews – in person or online
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Start Date

September 2021 (preferred) or January 2022

Welcome Message



Joanna Berry
Chair of Governors

Thank you for looking at this briefing document. I hope Lady Barn House School will surprise and excite you and that you will decide to apply for our headship.

We should surprise you because we manage to feel like a small school, even though we have 475 children here. We have a happy, family-friendly style, people know one another extremely well, and everyone genuinely cares about everyone else.

We should excite you because our ethos, put simply, is to offer a forward- thinking child-centred co-education to the very highest standards, with challenge, inspiration and full equality of opportunity for everyone at every stage. That plus our scale and resources means that wonderful things happen here.

At Lady Barn House School the children come first, and everything we do is because we care about their happiness, growth and achievement. If you too are child-focussed and keen to offer the best possible education in a friendly and encouraging environment, you'll enjoy being here and we'll enjoy having you.

Our outgoing Head, Mark Turner, has made a huge contribution and we will miss him greatly as he stands down from headship. His successor will, like him, be someone very special, and I hope it may be you!

If all this excites you, do please apply, and I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Background briefing

Overview of the School

Lady Barn House School (Lady Barn) is an independent prep school for boys and girls aged 3 to 11, situated in the affluent leafy suburb of Cheadle in Cheshire, just a few miles south-west of Manchester. Independent education is much prized throughout the area and parents have plenty of good schools to choose from. They have high expectations and the best schools have to be very good indeed.

Lady Barn has a very strong all-round reputation and is known for its breadth as well as its significant academic strength. With 475 pupils, it is by far the largest prep school in the area and one of the largest standalone prep schools in the UK. The children move on to a broad range of local independent senior schools and Lady Barn is a successful feeder to the most sought-after senior schools, such as Manchester Grammar School and Withington Girls' School. Lady Barn children are lively and stimulated, creative and have enquiring minds.



The school was founded in 1873 by William Herford, the renowned educationalist, with a radical vision of genuine co-education alongside true equality of opportunity, a happy and stimulating environment, and strong child-focussed teaching and exploration. The school broke new ground then and Lady Barn continues to offer a forward-thinking education in every area.

Staff are motivated, resources are excellent and high quality and academic teaching is accompanied by a huge range of co-curricular activities. The school has modern purpose-built premises which are immaculately maintained and the campus has been intelligently laid out so that there is plenty of space for everyone and every activity.

The school's finances are very healthy and its size and scale means that fees can be held at a very reasonable and competitive level.

Annual surpluses are significant but not excessive, and there is constant re-investment in the school's infrastructure and resources. The school's IT is excellent; during the 2020 lockdowns, the school was able to function extremely well with remote teaching by staff working at home. The experience has led to even more use of technology in classroom teaching.



Ethos

Lady Barn is based on traditional values but offers a very modern and forward-thinking education. William Herford's original vision was of genuine co-education alongside true equality of opportunity, delivered in a happy and stimulating child-focussed environment. That was far ahead of its time in a Victorian Britain where schooling was limited and highly disciplined.

In 2023 the school will celebrate its 150th anniversary and the original ethos still holds good. Lady Barn broke with tradition when it was founded and it is still happy to challenge conventions today. In terms of its style, the school is in no way complacent, stuffy, or pretentious. Children still come first and the school community is proud of what it does, not what it is. Individual children are valued, whatever their level of talent and ability, and success is celebrated in every area of achievement.



The education

Lady Barn House School offers a rich and very stimulating education from Nursery (ages 3-4) to Year 6. In line with its founding principles, the curriculum and the teaching methods reflect not just the modern world but the world of the future that the children will have to live, work and succeed in.

Because senior school transfer is such an important goal in this part of the country, teaching obviously ensures that children can succeed in whatever transfer processes they will undertake. But a Lady Barn education goes far beyond that. The academic curriculum is broad and aims particularly to promote creativity and ingenuity, critical thinking, self-challenge and self-confidence. STEAM, languages, and the performing and creative arts are all areas of strength and there are solid processes for assessing and managing individual progress at all stages.

The co-curricular programme is another highlight, and the size of the school allows it to offer a very broad range of possible activities. Each child can find and develop individual interests, strengths and enthusiasm, and the happy, supportive environment means that children are valued and nurtured as well as being encouraged, stimulated and gently stretched.

The school website gives much more information about all of the above.



Lady Barn House School and its market

South Manchester covers a large area and is broadly affluent and aspirational, with a vibrant and diverse population who particularly value good academic education. Parents work both in central Manchester and throughout the urban areas to the south of the city. Most Lady Barn families contain two working parents and a significant proportion work in medicine and other professions, as well as in business.

There are several major senior schools within reach, including Manchester Grammar, Manchester Girls' High, Withington, Stockport Grammar, Cheadle Hulme School and Alderley Edge School for Girls. All of these have their own junior schools and, in addition, there are several small and medium-sized prep schools. Parents therefore have a huge choice of independent schools as well as maintained schools.

In this part of the country, senior school entrance success dominates the minds of current and prospective parents. The academic strength of Lady Barn shows that its pupils are able to gain places and scholarships at all the top schools. In addition, as a standalone school Lady Barn has another advantage in that it is able to offer impartial advice about which senior school is right for an individual child. Its size means that it has strong ongoing relationships with all the schools it feeds, who are keen to attract its pupils.



Size and structure

Lady Barn has three forms in each year group from Reception onwards, which usually starts with two forms of children from the Nursery and a third one for children from other settings.

There are approximately 66 children in each year group, giving class sizes of between 20 and 22. The overall size of 475 makes Lady Barn one of the largest UK prep schools, particularly in the standalone sector.

The Early Years section consists of Nursery and Reception; Infants is Years 1 and 2; Lower Juniors is Years 3 and 4; and Upper Juniors is Years 5 and 6. This breaks the school into smaller groups, allowing line management to be closer to the children and staff and contributing to the small school atmosphere.

Overall, the school has a large teaching staff of some 45 teachers, including a team of subject specialists for music, science, IT and various specialist activities, plus 25 nursery and teaching assistants. The support team includes the Head's PA who also acts as HR Manager, general, academic and financial admin staff, and the Site Manager and his team. Catering and cleaning are sub-contracted.

Premises and Facilities

The school has a large and spacious campus on the edge of Cheadle, with modern purpose-built classrooms and a full range of specialist teaching facilities for science, IT, Art and DT, and a Performing Arts building that contains fully-equipped studios for Drama, Music and Dance.

The grounds include playing fields, floodlit multisport pitches and play areas, backing onto recreational parkland with sporting facilities.

The whole school site is well maintained, with an ongoing programme of planned refurbishments and continuing investment in additional facilities. Routine upkeep is carried out by the school's own premises staff and a team of contract cleaners.





Governors, the Charity, and the School as a business

The school is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, which means that it is required to provide public benefit and receives various tax benefits in exchange. It also means there are no shareholders taking dividends, so any annual surpluses can be re-invested in the school.

Overall responsibility lies with the Board of Governors, who are the trustees of the charity as well as non-executive directors of the company. They are unpaid volunteers and there are currently nine governors, offering a wide range of skills and expertise spanning business, the professions, and education. The Chair, Joanna Berry, is a commercial lawyer and a past parent of the school.

The Governors are friendly and professional, interested and supportive, and work well as a team. The Bursar acts as Clerk to the Governors. The Board has excellent relationships with the Head and the staff, acting as critical friends whilst also providing oversight and timely direction. Everyone shares the same core values and a strong commitment to the success of the school and the happiness of its pupils.

The local market demands affordable school fees and Lady Barn's scale means it can operate very competitively. Together with its reputation and academic and other achievements, this gives an extremely attractive offer to local parents. As a result the school is financially and commercially sound, with very solid demand for places and healthy finances. Annual turnover is £4.5 million and the 2019 surplus was some £200k. The school has no major borrowings and is very cash-positive.





Leadership

The current Headmaster, Mark Turner, is retiring from headship in Summer 2021 after five years at the school. He is very highly regarded by staff, parents and Governors, and much loved by the children. He has high expectations of his staff but is happy to delegate, and does so effectively, basing his leadership on trust, support and encouragement.

The SLT currently consists of the Headmaster together with the Bursar, the two Deputy Heads (Academic and Pastoral), and an Assistant Head who is DSL and oversees pupil assessment.

Each two-year section of the school has its own leadership, providing effective line management that is close to the children and teaching staff at every stage. The Heads of Early Years, Infants, Lower Juniors and Upper Juniors join with the SLT to form the Leadership Team.

The Bursar, Amanda Webb, is highly experienced and has the school business and infrastructure under excellent control. She is a key partner to the Headmaster and provides an excellent sounding-board for ideas. The Head's PA, Kelly Gardner, also acts as HR Manager and provides significant, dependable support to the Head and to the Leadership Team as a whole.



Strategic challenges and opportunities

Covid-19 presents a number of challenges to every school and we anticipate that the new Head will have to deal with some economic fallout as well as with whatever operational restrictions persist into 2022 and beyond. The size and quality of the school make it resilient, as does its financial strength, and past experience has always been that larger high-quality schools do better in tough times than smaller, weaker ones.

Lady Barn is a strong feeder at 11+ to all the main local senior schools. The top schools are highly competitive, so an obvious challenge is that Lady Barn must continue to achieve top academic results. Alongside this, local demographics mean the parent body has increasingly high expectations about senior school entrance and there is less interest in the traditional breadth that the school offers. The school, however, sees breadth as being stronger preparation for adult life than academics alone. The new Head will need to ensure we maintain the correct balance between achieving parental satisfaction and upholding the school's educational principles.

Changes in technology, working life and educational desirables mean that the school will have a host of new opportunities in the coming years. By definition a forward-thinking education needs to think ahead, and the Governors are keen that Lady Barn should maintain its strong reputation for offering a high-quality modern education that addresses future needs rather than past ones.

Job Description

The Position

This is a significant headship role and probably one of the most exciting to be found in any prep school in 2021. Lady Barn's size, ethos and aspirations will give the new Head tremendous scope to lead with innovation as well as sound management.

As Head of a standalone prep school, he or she will not be constrained by the limitations which apply to heads of tied-house junior schools, and because of our size we can do things that smaller schools cannot contemplate. At the same time, our ethos makes the role of Head immensely satisfying to anyone who wants to lead a school that cares more about its children than it does about itself.

As you would expect, this headship requires vision as well as depth of experience, leadership skills as well as management skills, and a real passion for academic excellence as well as for all-round education.

Our next Head could come from a variety of backgrounds. If you share our ethos and are excited by a job with great scope and the chance to achieve great personal and professional satisfaction, please read on and then complete our application form.





Job Description

Please note that a formal and more detailed job description will be provided to candidates invited for interview. All the relevant policies can be found on the School's website.

The role

- The Head is responsible for providing effective and inspirational leadership to the School, for providing an exciting, stimulating and effective education to all the pupils, and for the management and welfare of staff and pupils throughout the school. He or she reports directly to the Governing Body and is accountable for all aspects of the school's performance.

The main responsibilities are to

- promote and achieve the School's ethos, aims and objectives
- ensure the achievement of excellent educational and pastoral standards, and to promote and safeguard the welfare of all pupils and of the staff
- run the school safely, efficiently, effectively and in a way that is financially sound.

The Head is also accountable to the Governors for

- ensuring full compliance with all policies, with all statutory requirements and with accepted good/best practice
- ensuring that Governors are kept informed of progress and of all relevant issues
- providing the Board with timely professional guidance and sound recommendations for new vision, strategy, policies, and decisions.

Success in the role will require a deep and passionate interest in the well-being, personal and academic development of each and every child, with the ability and a willingness to encourage, stimulate and support pupils, staff and parents.



Key accountabilities

- Lead the overall strategy of the school and be an excellent role model to all.
- Recruit, retain, develop, motivate and manage staff.
- Develop the academic, extra-curricular and pastoral life of the school and ensure the highest standards of teaching, learning, care and encouragement.
- Manage the Bursar and the School's business, finances, premises and resources.
- Promote excellent working relations among and between staff and pupils.
- Ensure all policies are compliant with current regulations and reviewed regularly.
- Undertake appropriate professional development and keep abreast of educational developments, refining the school's vision and practice
- Instigate, plan and manage change effectively.
- Promote and market Lady Barn effectively to parents, senior schools and other audiences.



Person profile

Education and professional background

- A strong academic background and relevant educational qualifications.
- Experience of headship or senior leadership in a quality independent or state primary school.
- A clear educational philosophy.
- A strong vision of a successful prep school and its future evolution.

Personal characteristics

- An inspiring, confident, and friendly personality.
- A sense of humour, a sense of fun and a sense of community.
- Compassion, tolerance and tact.
- An open and approachable manner.
- A deep passion for the development and well-being of each pupil.
- A sympathy with the ethos of the school.
- Drive and energy, enthusiasm, efficiency, commitment.
- Calm under pressure, quietly determined, reliable and resilient.
- Adaptable, flexible, happy to embrace and lead change and new developments with a "can-do" attitude.
- Able to be a strong, visible and active presence in all parts of the School and in the wider community.
- A healthy fear of complacency, coupled with a willingness to challenge the status quo.
- A commitment to excellence.



Knowledge

- An obvious commitment to pupil welfare and safeguarding and a clear understanding of Child Protection.
- A thorough understanding of the curriculum and how children learn in the whole 3-11 age range.
- Fully abreast of current educational issues in primary and prep education
- An understanding of preparing children for entry to academically selective senior schools.
- Knowledge and understanding of the importance of regulatory compliance.
- Awareness of Health & Safety, charitable status, employment practice, safer recruiting, etc.

Thinking skills

- The ability to think strategically and pragmatically.
- Able to build and communicate an exciting and coherent vision.
- Sound judgement of people and situations.
- Fair, firm when necessary, decisive, and not afraid of difficult decisions.
- The ability to make education exciting and enjoyable as well as effective.



Communication skills

- The ability to communicate clearly, effectively and engagingly with pupils, parents, staff, Governors and others.
- Excellent presentation skills – confident in interactions with demanding parent body and community.
- Good listener with plenty of empathy.
- Marketing savvy and confident and impressive at public speaking.
- The ability to forge strong links with other schools, both locally and nationally, and to be involved in the wider community.



Leadership skills and style

- Inspirational and dynamic individual, team player and team leader.
- An inclusive and collaborative leader who will inspire high levels of confidence in colleagues, pupils and parents.
- The ability to manage others effectively and sensitively, gently as well as firmly, providing coaching as well as instructions.
- A decision maker; able to demonstrate understanding and sensitivity when resolving conflicts.
- Enjoys encouraging pupils and staff, recognising the strengths and contribution of others, and celebrating their success and achievements
- Role model to others, a standard-setter with high expectations.
- The ability to manage detail as well as the big picture.
- Customer focused and able to deal with 'fully involved' parents.
- Open, honest and supportive style.
- Able and willing to deploy a range of leadership and management techniques.
- Needs to have strategies for dealing with different and difficult people.



Business and management skills

- Financial and commercial awareness and the ability to balance educational and business considerations.
- Able to recognise opportunities and threats and act effectively in response.
- Ability to consider and discuss the widest strategic issues with Governors
- Empathy with administrative and support staff.
- Marketing awareness.

Remuneration and Terms

Remuneration

A comprehensive reward package will be offered, to reflect the experience and qualifications of the successful candidate.

The main elements are:

- an excellent salary
- contributions, currently to the Teachers' Pension Scheme or a personal pension if you prefer
- private health insurance
- a generous discount on your children's fees (if applicable), if they join the School
- ongoing investment in your personal training and development
- encouragement to be an ISI Inspector and an active member of IAPS and ISA.

Relocation support may be made available, if relevant.



Terms of employment

The Head's appointment is dependent on

- verification of medical fitness (a satisfactory medical questionnaire and/or examination)
- three satisfactory references including one from your current or most recent employer
- Enhanced DBS clearance and barred list check
- proof of qualifications
- proof of your entitlement to work in the UK.

A detailed contract will be agreed with the successful candidate, under terms usual to a headship. We use a standard Head's contract with appropriate amendments to reflect the individual's situation. A copy will be provided to short-listed candidates prior to final interview.

There will be a probationary period of one year during which either party can terminate the employment with one term's notice. Thereafter, three terms' notice will apply to either party.

Application process

Application process

We know you are busy and are keen to keep things as simple as possible.

To apply, simply download the Application Form, which is a Word document and easy to type into. Don't worry about page breaks or formatting. When you have finished, please e-mail it to Kelly Gardner, HR Manager, via k.gardner@ladybarnhouse.org. This email address is completely private.

We do not need a cover letter as the form includes a personal statement, but do use the e-mail to mention any preferences for interview dates or anything else that we can do to help you.

Applications must be received by 11am on Tuesday 19th January.

There is no need to visit Lady Barn before applying, as the school website contains plenty of photos as well as a 360° tour and lots of other information and all the School's main policies. The shortlist stage will of course include personal visits and a chance to see everything and meet the key people.



If you would like to discuss the School, the vacancy or any aspect of your application, please feel free to contact our advising consultant, Simon Shneerson, in strict confidence. He is completely discreet and aims to be helpful, honest, objective and informative. His telephone number is 07986 100 237 (any day of the week between 8am and 10pm) or you can reach him via info@simonshneerson.com.

Confidentiality

- References will only be requested at short-list stage and we will let you know before we approach referees.
- We will not contact your present school unless you reach the short-list and applications can be kept confidential until then. Please contact Simon Shneerson if you have any specific concerns.

Assessment process

Assessment process

First interviews will take place on 28-29th January and will be held online using Zoom or similar. We envisage seeing candidates for an hour or so and will aim to find a time that fits with your other commitments.

Short-listed applicants will be invited to take part in the final stage of the process. This will consist of

- a) A visit to the school between 4th and 10th February, on a date to be agreed individually with each candidate. This visit will consist of various assessment exercises and will give you a chance to meet Mark Turner and other key staff, and to have a good look at the school in action. The day will be designed to be informative, challenging, thoughtful and enjoyable.
- b) Final interviews with the Board of Governors on Thursday, 11th February.

If you have strong preferences for a particular day for either the first stage Zoom interview or the second stage visit, it will help if you could mention this in an e-mail note when you send in your application. If you do reach the final stage, we can arrange overnight accommodation if needed and reasonable travel expenses will be refunded on request.



Before the final interview, candidates will be asked whether they would be in a position to accept any offer of employment and/or provide questions that would put them in that position. A model contract will be provided to short-listed candidates.

Helpful feedback will be offered to unsuccessful candidates.

Thank you

Thank you for your interest in this post.

We very much look forward to hearing from you and, hopefully, to meeting you in person.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

The successful candidate will be expected to commit to the following:

Lady Barn seeks to provide a safe environment for children. All staff will adhere to and ensure compliance with the School's Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Statement at all times. If the Head becomes aware of any actual or potential risks to the safety of welfare of children in the school, he or she must immediately report any concerns to the School's Child Protection Officer.

Please note that it is the School's policy to employ the most suitable person for each appointment and not to discriminate against any person because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.



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www.ladybarnhouse.org

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