



**SHIPLAKE COLLEGE**  
HENLEY-ON-THAMES



# **Chief Operating Officer Candidate Information Pack**

## WELCOME FROM THE HEADMASTER

Dear Applicant

The word I hear mentioned most regularly when speaking to the students, parents, and staff of Shiplake College is 'community'. So, thank you for taking the time to consider the role of **Chief Operating Officer (COO)**, as it represents a wonderful opportunity to join and bring your own magic to our very special Shiplake community.

Shiplake College is an HMC co-educational boarding and day school offering a holistic education for around 540 students from Year 7 to Sixth Form. Co-educational in Sixth Form since 1998, we are on a journey to full co-education with girls and boys now in Year 7 and 8, and by 2027 Shiplake will be a fully co-educational place of learning. We are nestled in leafy South Oxfordshire, five minutes from Henley, and sit right on the River Thames. It is a stunning place to work.

We are a school where academic and character development sit alongside each other as we strive to help our students achieve their own personal best. We have real momentum, and the successful candidate will help to drive us to the next stage of our evolution.

They will demonstrate excellent organisational and interpersonal skills, be a strong match with the detailed requirements of the role and bring a blend of pragmatism and optimism to this role.

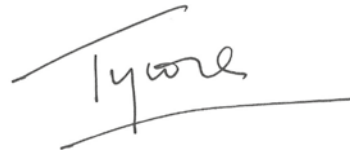
The COO will also be Clerk to the Governors and will have oversight of the financial health of Shiplake and play a vital role in the development and ownership of our strategic business plan. This

plan is fundamental in order to help the College navigate external challenges and also look after our estate, which includes a mix of listed buildings and state-of-the-art facilities.

This is a brilliant role for a strategic thinker who is motivated by making a visible difference to the running of a purposeful, people-orientated organisation. We are looking for a team player who has the experience to provide engaging and authentic leadership that will empower and enthuse others. They need to be able to thrive in a dynamic and fast-paced working environment where a sense of fun is essential and a smile never far away.

We are committed to finding the right person for this important role and as such would welcome applications from all sectors.

Thank you for your interest in working at Shiplake College and, as we look to an exciting future, I hope that you will consider being part of that story.



**Tyrone Howe**

“ Success comes in many guises at this school, and pupils grasp the opportunities offered and work hard to achieve their goals, be it as a professional athlete, entrepreneur, doctor, or artist.

*ISI Inspection, May 2022*

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## THE OPPORTUNITY

The Governors and Head are seeking to appoint a financially astute and commercially driven COO with outstanding leadership abilities. Building upon Shiplake's recent successful growth, this is an exciting opportunity for a strategic visionary with excellent interpersonal skills to work collaboratively with the Governors, Head and SMT to plan and deliver the College's financial, operational and commercial strategy to ensure its long-term success. At the same time, they will help navigate the College successfully through the political, economic and societal challenges that the independent school sector is facing. As a key strategic ally of the Head, they will play a major role in advising and supporting them and the SMT in the management and administration of the College, developing strategy and leading the finance, estates, IT and operations teams.

Candidates will be able to demonstrate proven ability in senior leadership and financial control, including managing resources effectively, delivering results, thinking strategically, and inspiring and motivating high functioning teams. They will possess strong financial acumen and be able to understand, interrogate and communicate financial information with confidence. The COO will be an empathetic leader with excellent interpersonal and people-management skills. The ability to communicate and engage effectively with all members of the Shiplake community is critically important for this role and emotional intelligence is essential.

The role requires resilience and experience in delivering and managing change, someone who seeks continuous improvement and empowers others to achieve it. A strong skill set including finance, strategic planning and execution, and operational delivery is required. The COO will demonstrate commercial acumen, coupled with first-rate analytical and business skills.

This senior position has a dual reporting line. The COO reports to the Head on a day to day to basis and as Clerk to the Board, they report to, and are accountable to, the Chairman of Governors.

Although prior experience in the education sector is not a prerequisite, candidates must be able to demonstrate empathy with independent education and commitment to Shiplake College's ethos and aims.

### Core Purpose

As well as playing a key part in the strategic development of the College, the COO is responsible for the effective leadership and management of the majority of the support functions of the College, including the effective application and management of resources. This extends to responsibility for finance, operations, compliance (including health and safety and data management), the estate (including the building fabric, technology, and environmental impact), catering and commercial activities. The ultimate aim is to ensure the smooth running of the College to support the Head and Governors in delivering the best possible outcomes for pupils.

As a key member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), the COO will be expected to play a full part in College life and be a visible and inspirational presence within the Shiplake community.

The COO has overall responsibility for a diverse team of circa 90, led and managed by a group of high performing professionals, expert in their field. The COO has five direct reports who, in addition to their PA are:

- Head of Finance
- Head of Estates who is also responsible for domestic operations, health and safety and compliance
- Director of Digital Strategy
- HR Manager
- Head of Administrative Support



The responsibilities outlined below are not exhaustive but are indicative of the requirements of this significant and wide-ranging role.

## Key Responsibilities

### Strategic Leadership and Management

- As a member of the SMT, contribute to developing and implementing the College's vision and strategy, with particular responsibility for improving business and operational performance.
- Ensure the smooth running of all the College's support operations.
- Lead by example: be an inspiring leader of the support staff; bring out the best in them; and facilitate strong working relationships between the teaching and support staff.
- Advise and update the Head as appropriate, in all the key areas of responsibility outlined below.

### Governance

- Act as Company Secretary and Clerk to the Board to ensure the College complies with all company and charity law and adheres to its Articles of Association and they remain fit for purpose.
- Ensure the efficient operation of the Board and its Committees through the Chairman by providing the necessary information, arranging training, visits, meetings, agendas and papers as well as updates on legislative and statutory changes.
- Maintaining an up-to-date register of Governors and the balance of skills as necessary.

### Finance

- Manage the financial performance of the College and Enterprises Company maintaining a sustainable forward looking strategic financial plan.

- Advise the Governors, Head and SMT on all matters relating to financial strategy including allocation of resources, the impact of their decisions on the College's financial and strategic position and commercial matters.
- Ensure that a robust system of financial planning and control operates across the College consistent with strategy, policies and procedures.
- Advise the Governors on borrowing requirements, cashflow projections, manage debt and ensure compliance with any covenants.
- Oversee the work of the Head of Finance and their team, including the provision of budgets, cash flow forecasts, management and statutory accounts, the annual audit, the processing of the payroll and pensions, billing, purchasing, the Asset Register, VAT and other tax arrangements.
- Analyse school fees and costs, including benchmarking and work with the Governors and Head to set fee levels and provide insight into the College's pricing strategies.
- Ensure fair and robust debtor management, including meeting with parents when necessary.
- Oversee bursary and hardship applications.
- Manage relationships with key external services including the bank, lawyers, auditors and insurers.
- Review and negotiate tenders and contracts within agreed limits and ensure effective procurement arrangements are in place to facilitate best value

### Estates and Services

- Ensure the effective management of the College's estate in line with its objectives, protecting its integrity and seeking opportunities to enhance its value.
- Develop and maintain an effective forward looking master plan which supports the strategic vision.



- Oversee the work of the Head of Estates and their team to ensure delivery of a planned maintenance programme for all the College's buildings, grounds, on-site staff accommodation, gardens and all-weather pitches to the required standard and compliant with regulations, including health and safety, fire and the Independent Schools Standards.
- Oversee the delivery of capital projects to time, specification, and budget.
- Ensure appropriate arrangements for the security of the site.
- Seek to integrate sustainable solutions and initiatives to reduce the College's environmental footprint and energy consumption.

## **IT**

- Oversee the development and implementation of an IT strategy aligned with the College's strategic plan.
- Oversee the development, procurement, delivery and management of cost-effective IT infrastructure, data and services to support high-quality teaching and learning, communications and administration for all areas of the College's operations.
- Facilitate the safety, security and integrity of the College's IT network and digital data.

## **Human Resources**

- Work with the HR Manager to develop the College's People strategy and manage in accordance with the College's policies.
- Engage actively in the performance review process to support the training and professional development of direct reports and the wider staff.

## **Compliance, Health and Safety and Risk Management**

- Act as the College's Privacy and Compliance Officer.
- Act as Authorising Officer for Tier 4 visas.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, ensuring policies, procedures and training are in place and champion their application throughout the College.
- Promote a positive Health and Safety culture throughout the College and fulfil all the COO responsibilities as set out in accordance with the College's Health and Safety Policy.
- Drive the identification, assessment, and management of business risk including the management of the risk assessment process and Risk Register.
- Ensure that the College has appropriate insurance cover for all key insurable risks.
- Lead business continuity planning to ensure that the College is well prepared for any emergency.

## **Business Development**

- Oversee the current lettings operation, including setting targets and identifying opportunities to generate additional non-fee revenue streams, supported by the Head of Estates.
- Act as an officer (Company Secretary and or Director) of Shiplake Court Enterprises Limited.
- Coordinate the preparation and presentation of business cases for major projects.

## **Safeguarding and Welfare of Children**

Shiplake College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. You will undertake your role and responsibilities in accordance with the College's Safeguarding Policy which can be found [here](#).



## PERSON SPECIFICATION

The successful candidate will bring the following qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge, leadership style and personal attributes.

### Qualifications and Experience

- Educated to degree level or equivalent.
- A professional qualification in a relevant field.
- A strong track record of successful leadership experience in a complex organisation and working with a Board or equivalent structure.
- Direct experience at senior level of both finance strategy and operations.
- Proven experience of leading and developing high performing multi-disciplinary teams.
- Experience of working within a complex budgetary structure, leading efficiency savings and business improvement initiatives.
- Project management, including building projects.

### Skills and Knowledge

- Able to contribute effectively to the strategic development of the College, whilst maintaining direct operational responsibilities.
- Strong financial acumen and financial literacy with good analytical skills and the ability to present financial information clearly and concisely.
- First-class communication and negotiation skills – able to balance robustness with constructive, positive discussion and diplomacy with the confidence and personal authority to represent the College with a broad range of stakeholders.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and high levels of emotional intelligence.

- Business acumen and commercial awareness; an organised mindset, with excellent time management skills and ability to work to tight deadlines.
- Technically and IT literate, with practical knowledge of new technologies.
- An understanding of property, planning and facilities management.
- Ability to manage change.
- Creative and visionary in respect of the development of this role and the College
- Comfortable working in a regulated environment and committed to ensuring that the College is compliant.

### Leadership Style and Personal Attributes

- A highly visible leader who is able to work both independently and as a key team member, with energy and ambition to inspire and empower colleagues and wider stakeholders.
- High professional and personal standards, notably integrity, honesty and discretion.
- Proactive, energetic and enthusiastic, pragmatic with a positive 'can do' attitude and a sense of humour.
- Committed team player with a collegiate and collaborative approach.
- A strong work ethic.
- Fair and calm, diplomatic, empathetic, resilient with good judgement.
- An understanding of the College's responsibilities in relation to Child Protection and Safeguarding and a clear commitment to delivering best practice in safeguarding.
- Values and promotes diversity, equality and inclusion.



## ABOUT SHIPLAKE COLLEGE

Shiplake College is a thriving independent co-educational boarding and day school for pupils aged 11-18. Founded in 1959, the College is relatively young in comparison with many traditional independent schools in the UK but it boasts a rich history and tradition of its own. The College has expanded steadily in recent years, growing from 470 pupils in 2019 to 540 at present and has aspirations to grow further to 600. Girls first joined the Sixth Form in 1998 and in spring 2021 the College announced it would welcome girls into Year 7 from September 2023 and start the transition to become fully co-educational. Girls now make up 40% in each of the co-ed year groups.

Every pupil is placed at the heart of Shiplake life and the College's ethos is underpinned by the three I's – Inclusive, Individual and Inspirational. Shiplake provides a friendly, supportive and structured environment to bring out the best in each and every pupil. Renowned for outstanding pastoral care and personal development, the College welcomes pupils with wide-ranging skills and talents, who will make the most of the many opportunities offered to them.

The College provides an education that is tailored to the individual, achieved through engaging and inspirational teaching, delivered in small classes where the teachers can know and understand each pupil's method of learning.

The College continues to achieve a year-on-year improvement in examination results. In August 2024, Shiplake leavers achieved a record number of A\*-A at A Level – 40% of grades, with the highest ever number gaining a place at their first-choice university.

In addition to a strong academic foundation, Shiplake has a formidable reputation for sports, particularly rowing, and the College offers excellent, artistic and co-curricular opportunities as well. Three afternoons are reserved for an array of clubs and activities, including a comprehensive outdoor education programme, with pupils encouraged to extend their horizons and experience new challenges and responsibilities.

While Year 7 and 8 are for day pupils, there are flexi, weekly, and full boarding options from Year 9 through to Sixth Form. 160 flexi, weekly and full boarders become fully integrated into Shiplake's inclusive and welcoming environment. International pupils, predominantly from Hong Kong, China, and Germany represent approximately 5% of the school population.

“ Older pupils and leavers say that they feel well prepared for their future lives, having been given confidence and the feeling that they could 'change the world'.

*ISI Inspection, May 2022*

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## Location and Facilities

Overlooking the River Thames in South Oxfordshire, two miles upstream of the famous Henley Royal Regatta stretch, Shiplake occupies a beautiful 63-acre rural site. The College is conveniently located near major air, railway and motorway networks, close to Reading, London and Oxford and just 40 minutes from Heathrow.

The main buildings are centred on the original Shiplake Court, a Victorian manor house built in 1890 now known as Skipwith House. The focal point of the ground floor is the Great Hall, which hosts major College events and is used day-to-day as a dining room for pupils and staff. There has been significant development, totalling £10m of investment, across the site in the last 10 years to support the expansion of the College and more recently its move to co-education.

The College completed twelve new classrooms and three additional Science labs in 2024. The next element of the estate development plan is to create a new Sixth Form Centre, which is planned for



completion by summer 2025. Future new capital projects include a new Food Technology and Design studio together with further classrooms.

The College also boasts a range of excellent sporting facilities. There is a multi-purpose indoor sports centre with gym and a designated strength and conditioning room. The College opened six new outdoor playing pitches in September 2024 and from January 2025 will open an international-sized artificial pitch.

With its location on the River Thames and its own stretch of water and private island, the College has extensive rowing facilities. The Davies Centre was opened in 2020 and houses the College's fleet of rowing boats, as well as a fitness suite, an indoor archery and rifle range, a two-storey climbing wall and storage for other watersports, CCF, Outdoor Education and Duke of Edinburgh's Award equipment.

“ More able pupils' excellent achievements and talents are celebrated, benefiting from the school's fulfilment of its aim to promote an enthusiastic ethos of participation and the importance placed on attaining their personal best.

*ISI Inspection, May 2022*

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## GOVERNANCE AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Shiplake College, with its legal name of Shiplake Court Limited is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The Board of Governors, as the company's directors and the charity's trustees, are legally responsible for the overall direction and management of the College. The College is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The College is supported by a highly experienced and knowledgeable Board of Governors with a wide range of relevant experience. There are currently 14 Governors who meet as a Board four times a year. The work of implementing the College's strategy and policies is carried out by sub-committees, these are Finance and General Purposes, Education and Safeguarding, and Risk and Compliance. Responsibility for the day-to-day running of the College is delegated to the Head, supported by the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the Senior Management Team (SMT) which also includes the Deputy Head Academic, Deputy Head Pastoral and the Director of External Relations.

Shiplake College is regularly inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, and at the last inspection in 2022 was declared to be Excellent in all fields. This report can be viewed [here](#).

## FINANCE

The College finances are healthy and have benefited from a steady increase in pupil numbers in recent years which has generated additional surplus against projections and budget.

As a registered charity, the College is mindful of the continued financial pressures facing all parents and strives to ensure value for money whilst continuing to invest in the recruitment, development and retention of outstanding teachers. The College is constantly looking at opportunities to further develop the site and the COO will play a key role in exploring, suggesting and managing these ventures alongside the Board. The COO is supported by a fully trained accountant.

The Governors are committed to broadening access to the College by offering means-tested financial support to eligible parents or guardians to assist with the payment of school fees.

Full financial information is in Shiplake's annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023, which can be found [here](#).



## TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

A highly attractive remuneration package is offered, reflecting the seniority and significance of the position. The salary offered will depend on skills and experience.

This is a full time 52-week post and some flexibility of working hours will be required in light of the role and responsibilities it entails.

The main benefits are likely to include:

- Annual holiday entitlement of 30 days plus statutory bank holidays.
- A generous staff discount on fees for children.
- Contributory employer's pension scheme.
- Group life assurance.
- Private health care.
- Parking on site.
- Complimentary school lunches when the kitchens are operational.
- Access to onsite gym facilities and outdoor swimming pool at specific times.
- Annual progressional membership subscriptions

Shiplake College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service and a review of their social media presence.



All appointments are subject to satisfactory reference, DBS and other statutory checks, proof of identity and eligibility to work in the UK, completion of a medical questionnaire and proof of qualifications.

Shiplake College is also committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and applications from individuals are encouraged regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and marriage and civil partnerships.



## THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics in the first instance, to arrange a confidential discussion with:

Hannah Freestone-Smith: [hannahfreestone-smith@rsacademics.com](mailto:hannahfreestone-smith@rsacademics.com)  
or Nina Lambert: [ninalambert@rsacademics.com](mailto:ninalambert@rsacademics.com).

**The deadline for receipt of applications is 10.00am on Monday 27 January 2025.**

Applications should be made electronically to RSAcademics. To submit your application please upload your documents according to the instructions on the [RSAcademics website](#).

You should submit:

- A completed application form (available to download from [www.rsacademics.com](http://www.rsacademics.com)).
- A covering letter addressed to the Head, Mr Tyrone Howe. The letter should be a maximum of two pages and should explain your reasons for applying and outline your suitability for the role.

If you have any questions about uploading your application documents, please contact Laura Beacon, Project Coordinator, at [applications@rsacademics.com](mailto:applications@rsacademics.com). Laura can also be reached by calling our Head Office on +44 (0)1858 383163.

The process is as follows:

All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement that your application has been received within two working days of sending it, please contact our Head Office by telephone.

- Preliminary interviews will take place with RSAcademics via Microsoft Teams in the week commencing **3 February 2025**.
- Longlist interviews will take place at Shiplake College on **14 February 2025**.
- Shortlist interviews will take place at Shiplake College on **28 February 2025**.

Founded in 2002 by Russell Speirs, RSAcademics has advised and supported over 700 schools and educational organisations in the UK and worldwide. Through our working partnerships with heads, leadership teams, boards, staff and parents, we specialise in supporting schools in five main areas: strategy, marketing and research; equality, diversity and inclusion; operational improvement; leadership and governance and philanthropy. We enable schools worldwide to thrive, by finding and developing senior leaders, guiding decision makers, making connections and shaping debate. We are known for the calibre and spirit of our people. We exist entirely to serve schools because we believe that the world needs thriving schools. Please visit [www.rsacademics.com](http://www.rsacademics.com) for more information.

*RS Academics is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in schools and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.*





**The School Day**

- 7.00am • Boarders' Breakfast
- 8.00am • Buses Arrive/Registration
- 8.20am • Assembly/Chapel/Tutor
- 8.40am • Lessons Begin
- 3.30pm • Games/Co-Curricular Activities
- 4.45pm • Prep/Academic Clinics
- 5.00pm • Supper
- 6.15pm • Buses Depart
- 7.00pm • Boarders Activities Programme



**9** Daily Bus Routes  
**1** Weekly West London Route



**2:1** applications for each place



**10%** discount for most scholarships



**Academic, Art, Drama, Music and Sport** Scholarships available



**Means-Tested Bursaries** available



Fees include **snacks** at break, **lunch** and **dinner**

**Fees Spring/Summer 2025**

**Registration Fee**

**£150** inc. VAT (non-refundable)

**Acceptance Deposit**

**£1,750** (UK and EU), with £500 credited to the second term's bill.

**Lower School (Years 7 and 8)**

**£8,426** per term inc. VAT

**Years 9-13**

Day

**£10,714** per term inc. VAT

*Flexi-Boarding* (up to 2 nights a week)

**£13,123** per term inc. VAT

*Weekly Boarding* (up to 6 nights a week)

**£15,026** per term inc. VAT

*Full Boarding*

**£16,698** per term inc. VAT

**Headline Figures**



**539** current school roll (2024-2025)



**30%** flexi, weekly and full boarding



**42%** girls in Years 7 and 8



**1:6.5** teacher:pupil ratio

**Sport and Co-Curricular**



**50+** sports and co-curricular activities available



Success in **rowing** for girls and boys at Schools' Head, NSR, HRR, and at international level



Active **Outdoor Education Programme** and **CCF** (Army, Royal Navy and Air Force)



**150** pupils completing **Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award**



**30** pupils completing **Gold and Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Award**

**Destinations and Careers**



**91%** secured places at first or second choice university



**66%** progressed to top third UK universities



**39%** progressed to Russell Group universities



Top UK destinations 2024: York, Nottingham, Loughborough, Trent, Exeter, Cardiff, Royal Holloway



Top degree subjects 2024: Business, Marketing, Sport, Engineering, Criminology



USA university destinations 2024: Harvard, Boston, Iowa and Washington



Microsoft Surface unified **device policy**



All **mobile phones** handed in at the start of each day

**Exam Results**



**93%** of GCSE results were 9-4 grades (2024)



**97%** of Sixth Form results were A\*-C (or equivalent)

**Teaching and Learning**



**27** subject options at Sixth Form



**5** options for additional Year 12 qualification with UCAS points



**21** subjects offered at GCSE



**1** bespoke Key Stage 3 curriculum



**16** average class size



**8** average tutor group size



**40** pupils are children of Old Vikings (former pupils) and staff

**Creative Arts**



**204** pupils receiving tuition in at least one instrument



**17** different instruments taught



**8** core ensembles and choirs



**7** drama productions and showcases a year



**80** pupils involved in whole school musical 2024



**37** pupils taking LAMDA lessons



**3** whole school art and photography competitions and **1** golden easel



Up to **30** staff dogs on site each day

Go to [www.shiplake.org.uk](http://www.shiplake.org.uk) to find out more about our school and see our latest news and photos  
or follow us on our social media channels



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Shiplake College

