



GORDONSTOUN

Broader experiences, broader minds.

BRIEF FOR THE POSITION OF

Founding Principal

GORDONSTOUN JAPAN WEST



Broader
experiences,
broader minds.

ODGERS

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ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Background

Gordonstoun is a co-educational boarding and day school in Elgin, Scotland, which educates some 500 students aged 4½-18. For more than eighty years, Gordonstoun has been the world leader in character education with a curriculum which is unrivalled in its breadth.

The Gordonstoun motto, *Plus Est En Vous – “there is more in you”* – is as relevant today as it was when visionary educationalist, Dr Kurt Hahn, founded the school in 1934. Through Gordonstoun, Hahn realised his vision of establishing an international school to foster individuality and service in young people within a community context. His philosophy established Gordonstoun as a pioneer in independent education and the school continues to be a leader for the twenty-first century.

What makes Gordonstoun exceptional is its wholehearted dedication to character education. Student learning takes place

not only in the classroom, where superb teachers share their passion in exciting and stimulating lessons. It is also fostered in an outstanding programme of expeditions, sail training and adventurous activity. Skills are learned in the concert hall, on the sports field and on the stage. Crucially, they are developed in a climate of challenge and of service to others. Gordonstoun runs nine services from the fire station to first aid, sports coaching and community service and every senior student takes part.

The key ideas that bind all those who work and study at Gordonstoun are: *Challenge, Responsibility, Resilience, Service, Compassion, Achievement and Internationalism*. The Gordonstoun staff aim to give young people the skills they will need throughout their lives. Students learn how to work in a team and how to lead as well as how to recognise the leadership skills of others. The students learn confidence, resilience and the importance of being open to new ideas. They learn through the excitement of meeting a challenge and they learn through the times when they may fail. The school reinforces these skills and experiences with a focus on perhaps the most important of human attributes: humility, compassion and kindness.



‘Plus Est En Vous – There is more in you (than you think)’

Kurt Hahn, Founder of Gordonstoun



The mission and unique curriculum

The unique Gordonstoun curriculum is driven by two distinct but complementary forces. The first is the concept of personal challenge encapsulated in the school motto. The second is the development of open-minded, determined young people set in a societal context – the role of the responsible individual in the community. The belief is that the well-educated citizen can make a difference and will wish to do so. Hence, the mission statement: "Gordonstoun prepares each student through learning by diverse experience for a full and active role as an international citizen in a changing world."

The mission is inspired by the school's founder who also pioneered the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the United World College movement. Gordonstoun's philosophy is based on the holistic development of its students, treating each as an individual, encouraging

learning through experience, and maximising achievement and fulfilment through the fostering of emotional intelligence.

Great examination results are also very important and Gordonstoun knows the value of equipping students with strong academic ambitions and qualifications. The students' academic progress is enhanced by the lessons of personal integrity, critical awareness and compassion, that they gain from their wider school experience.

The Gordonstoun approach is unique and the dedicated staff are unerring in the thought and effort they put into their mission. For them, the test of their success comes in each new school year and, even more significantly, ten years after the students leave. Gordonstoun students become people of character and agency; they learn to live rewarding lives while contributing something of value to others.





*‘Challenge, Responsibility, Resilience,
Compassion, Achievement and
Internationalism’*

Gordonstoun Japan West

Gordonstoun Japan West will be a landmark new international school opening in September 2027 in Wakayama City, bringing Gordonstoun's globally respected ethos of character education, service, leadership and academic excellence to the Kansai region. A partnership between Osaka Christian College (OCC) and Gordonstoun International, Gordonstoun Japan West will cater for UK Years 7–13 (ages 11–18) as a co-educational boarding and day school, growing to a planned capacity of approximately 700 students. The student body will be a balanced mix of local, national and international families, reflecting both the school's strong regional roots and its global outlook.

Wakayama City provides an exceptional environment for a new Gordonstoun school. The campus is located in a safe, coastal city known for its natural beauty, maritime culture and warm, welcoming communities. The area is rich in history and culture, featuring landmarks such as Wakayama Castle, the scenic marina district (home to the Japan national sailing team) and the wider Kii Peninsula, home to world-renowned cultural heritage sites and diverse outdoor adventure opportunities. This environment aligns perfectly with Gordonstoun's educational philosophy, offering outstanding opportunities for sailing, expeditions, service learning and personal development.

The city is also strategically well connected. Osaka, Japan's third-largest city and a major commercial and cultural hub, is less than one hour away by train, providing access to a large international population and extensive cultural and educational resources. Kansai International Airport (KIX), one of Asia's major international gateways, is around 45 minutes from the planned campus, providing excellent connectivity for boarding families, international staff and visiting educators.

The project itself is an ambitious and carefully phased development. It includes the refurbishment of the existing Centre Building, the construction of new boarding houses designed to UK National Boarding Standards, specialist teaching spaces, and a campus plan

that blends Gordonstoun's distinctive identity with the aesthetic and cultural character of its Japanese setting. The educational model will integrate Gordonstoun's established broader curriculum approach, including a strong focus on character education, outdoor learning and sailing, with a locally relevant and culturally respectful programme shaped in close partnership with OCC and prefectural authorities. Together, these elements position Gordonstoun Japan West as one of the most exciting and authentically collaborative new international school openings in the region.

Further information on Gordonstoun can be found via the school's website:

www.gordonstoun.org.uk



ROLE DESCRIPTION

The Role

Gordonstoun Japan West will be the first Gordonstoun-branded boarding school in Asia, bringing Gordonstoun's world-leading character education to a Japanese context rooted in respect, community, stewardship of nature and holistic development. Opening in phases, the Founding Principal will take up post prior to launch to establish the school's vision, ethos, academic model, boarding structures and operational readiness.

The Founding Principal will report to the Advisory Board and work closely with Gordonstoun (Scotland) and OCC, a respected educational partner in Japan, contributing local expertise, cultural insight and operational coordination. The Principal will lead all aspects of establishing the school including strategy, staffing, curriculum, boarding, compliance, culture and stakeholder engagement.

Key responsibilities will include:

Pre-Opening

- Shape a distinctive vision that reflects Gordonstoun's ethos while honouring Japan's educational and cultural traditions, in collaboration with Gordonstoun and OCC.



- Build strong, culturally respectful relationships with OCC leaders, local authorities and the Advisory Board.
- Lead recruitment of academic, pastoral and boarding staff aligned with Gordonstoun's values and Japanese professional expectations.
- Oversee student recruitment locally and internationally, engaging Japanese families, expatriates and corporate partners.
- Establish governance structures, policies, risk protocols and operational systems for a successful opening.
- Lead curriculum, pastoral, outdoor education and co-curricular development tailored for Japan.
- Ensure compliance with MEXT and prefectural regulatory requirements, with OCC providing local insight.

Strategic Leadership

- Work with the Advisory Board, Gordonstoun and OCC to define strategic direction, goals and policies.
- Provide inspiring leadership to build a culture of character, challenge, compassion and global citizenship.
- Communicate a clear and compelling school vision to students, staff, parents, OCC, regulators and partners.

- Develop annual school improvement plans with measurable outcomes.
- Ensure systems and structures evolve as the school grows.
- Position Gordonstoun Japan West as the premier boarding school choice in Japan and the region.
- Oversee compliance with MEXT, safeguarding, governance and accreditation requirements.

Organisational Leadership

- Assume overall responsibility for financial performance, enrolment and sustainability, working with OCC and Gordonstoun.
- Ensure strong financial controls and responsible budgeting.
- Establish high-functioning non-academic teams including admissions, HR, operations, boarding, facilities and compliance.
- Ensure operational systems – including safety, catering, weekend programmes and student support – meet Gordonstoun and Japanese expectations.



Educational Leadership

- Build a curriculum that reflects Gordonstoun's character-education ethos while meeting MEXT requirements and global university pathways.
- Ensure high-quality teaching, learning, assessment and academic outcomes.
- Implement a holistic programme integrating outdoor education, adventurous activity, service and the arts.
- Establish rigorous pastoral and boarding systems ensuring wellbeing, safety and personal growth.
- Promote a culture of continuous professional learning and innovation.
- Support graduates to progress to leading universities in Japan and worldwide.
- Foster an environment blending Japanese values of respect, diligence and humility with Gordonstoun's resilience and service ethos.

People Leadership

- Build a high-performing senior leadership team capable of realising a founding vision.
- Recruit staff aligned with Gordonstoun's ethos and committed to boarding, supported by OCC for local processes.
- Provide high-quality professional development and appraisal.
- Strengthen communication across academic, pastoral, boarding and operational teams.
- Shape a staff culture that values excellence, kindness, collaboration and wellbeing.

Community & External Relations

- Serve as an ambassador for Gordonstoun Japan West, representing the school with OCC locally and internationally.
- Build trusted relationships with parents, educators, government bodies, OCC networks and community partners.
- Ensure transparent and culturally respectful communication.
- Promote community engagement, service partnerships and local collaboration.
- Foster a school culture aligned with Japanese values such as omoiyari (empathy), gambaru (effort) and kizuna (community bonds).

Health and Safety & Safeguarding

- Ensure all safeguarding, health and safety and child-protection standards meet Japanese regulations and Gordonstoun's international expectations.
- Oversee boarding safety, supervision, crisis response and staff training.
- Ensure campus security, maintenance and health and safety protocols reflect best practice, supported by OCC in local compliance.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

The Person

Qualifications and Experience

Essential:

- Strong academic background with relevant qualifications.
- A minimum of five years of successful senior school leadership.
- Experience navigating complex stakeholder environments (boards, regulators, investors, community leaders).
- Deep understanding of holistic, character-based or values-led education.
- Experience in culturally diverse environments with strong cultural sensitivity.
- Demonstrated commitment to boarding education.

Desirable:

- Experience in Japan or strong understanding of Japanese culture.
- Experience opening a new school or leading substantial school growth.
- Experience in premium, international or mission-driven schools.
- Familiarity with MEXT regulatory processes.
- Experience working with partners such as OCC or similar educational institutions.

Skills and Abilities

- Strategic thinker with the capacity to define and deliver a compelling founding vision.
- Highly skilled intercultural relationship-builder, especially within Japan.

- Inspirational communicator and credible representative of the school.
- Commercially astute; able to balance educational and business imperatives.
- Able to collaborate across UK-Japan partnership structures.
- Creative and innovative, adapting Gordonstoun's traditions to Japan.
- Strong ambassadorial presence in both Japanese and international settings.

Values & Personal Characteristics

- Deep alignment with Gordonstoun's ethos of challenge, service, resilience and compassion.
- Respectful of Japanese culture; demonstrates humility and curiosity.
- Resilient, adaptable and energised by building a school from the ground up.
- Emotionally intelligent with excellent relational judgement.
- Entrepreneurial, forward-thinking and open to innovation.
- Warm, engaging and grounded, with a sense of humour and humanity.
- Strong belief in the transformative power of boarding and experiential education.



APPLICATION PROCESS

How to Apply

OCC and Gordonstoun International have engaged the services of Odgers to assist with the recruitment of the Founding Principal.

Shortlist interviews with the Selection Committee will take place via Zoom during **week commencing 19 January**. Candidates invited to the final round will have the opportunity to visit Japan ahead of a final interview.

In order to apply, please submit a CV and 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/94920.

All applications will receive an automated response.

For an initial discussion, please contact:

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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.

Gordonstoun is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the relevant authorities.

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