



WEST BUCKLAND
SCHOOL

Head of Prep

CANDIDATE INFORMATION



Welcome

The Governors of West Buckland School welcome applications for the position of **Head of Prep from September 2026**. The successful applicant will be someone who will continue to develop the school and maintain its strong reputation whilst upholding our values and ethos. We are therefore seeking to appoint a Head of Prep who will embrace the school's aims and vision while being a proactive and dynamic leader of West Buckland School.

West Buckland prides itself on its family ethos, with a supportive parent body and dedicated staff who care passionately about how they can best serve each individual child in their care. Our philosophy at West Buckland is that being happy and successful is central to a person's wellbeing – be that pupils or staff. As a result, pupils leave as confident and self-assured young adults with academic results and an enquiring mind that places them in an ideal position to be successful, global citizens able to seize opportunities as they arise.

We are looking for a Head of Prep with the passion, vision, and the relevant experience to take West Buckland School forward into the next phase of its development. The ideal candidate will be forward-looking, have sound proven business acumen, be motivated and ready to lead and embrace a changed landscape for independent schools.

Located at the foot of Exmoor and close to the South West Coast Path, West Buckland offers a rich and unique outdoor learning experience. Our Combined Cadet Force (CCF) programme instils discipline and leadership in our students, while our commitment to sustainability is exemplified by our pioneering Sustainability Festival, the first of its kind, which took place in June 2025. These and other initiatives reflect our commitment to providing a holistic and enjoyable education that we believe prepares students extremely well for their future journey through life after leaving the school.

Andrew Jackson
Chair of Governors



WEST BUCKLAND
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Introduction

West Buckland School is a thriving independent co-educational day and boarding school, with 520 children aged 3–18 from the UK and around the world. We are a HMC, COBIS and IAPS school, providing parents with confidence in the quality being offered.

Set in 100 acres of beautiful North Devon countryside, we are the leading independent school in North Devon. Founded in 1858, we have a rich history and deep connection to the community, with many alumni now parents of students at the school. We have a well-established reputation for the quality of our teaching, academics, sports and creative arts. The school's open, honest and inclusive cultural framework ensures that our community is warm and welcoming to everyone.

Class sizes are small, kept to a maximum of 18 in the Prep School. We provide a personalised education, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning, guided by our excellent teachers.

Pupils are admitted from the age of 3 into our onsite Nursery, cared for by specialist practitioners in EYFS.

Pupils move to Pre-Prep at Reception age, graduating from one form to two form entry as they pass through the Prep School which encompasses pupils up to Year 6. At this stage the vast majority of pupils move into the senior school at Year 7. Pupil numbers in the Prep School sit at around 100 pupils.

For a small school, the high standard of sporting success and the extensive games programme are made possible by the expertise and commitment of the teaching staff. Prep pupils enjoy a rich performing arts programme led by a team of extremely talented and dedicated staff. Pupils also benefit from an extensive and evolving outdoor learning programme.

The school is forward-thinking in all aspects of teaching, learning and curriculum and in particular through:

- Providing an innovative and creative education relevant to the 21st century.
- Encouraging the virtue of learning in young people, delivering 21st-century learning habits.
- Living the school's Christian values through excellent pastoral care.
- Flourishing and investing in the future.

"As part of the wide range of abilities, there are some very bright pupils who have floundered elsewhere but who thrive in this small, nurturing environment."

History & Ethos

West Buckland School, established in 1858 by Reverend Brereton in collaboration with Lord Fortescue, began its journey in a modest farmhouse with just three boys. As the school expanded, it relocated to its current site, remaining deeply embedded in the agricultural community and maintaining strong ties throughout North Devon. The school was founded on Christian principles and values, which continue to be upheld while embracing students from diverse backgrounds, regardless of their faith.

Today, West Buckland School has flourished into the leading independent school in North Devon, with a student body exceeding 500 pupils, ranging from ages 3 to 18. The school's reach extends far beyond the local community, attracting students from as distant as Fiji.

At the core of West Buckland's ethos are the values of honesty, respect, resilience, curiosity, and kindness, which permeate every aspect of school life.

West Buckland School is dedicated to nurturing students who are not only academically proficient but also caring, thoughtful, and empathetic. The school's commitment to developing well-rounded individuals ensures that students grow into compassionate and understanding members of society, equipped with the skills and values necessary to make meaningful contributions to the world around them.



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“We love the progressive approach to academics, with its focus on entrepreneurship and employability.”

Talk Education



The Opportunity

With the new Head of School also set to take up their position in September 2026, this presents a remarkable opportunity for an ambitious and dynamic leader to join and steer the Prep School through its next phase. Collaborating closely with the Governors, Head and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the new Head of Prep will be instrumental in shaping the vision for the coming decade and beyond.

The incoming Head of Prep must cultivate a deep understanding of Devon's educational landscape, recognising both the unique niche West Buckland occupies and the challenges it faces. Additionally, the evolving societal, political, and economic climate demands that schools, including West Buckland, carefully consider the expectations of millennial parents regarding their children's education.

The successful candidate will need to swiftly earn the trust of parents, staff, and pupils. They will have the chance to build upon established traditions and successes while also leaving their own distinctive mark on the school, addressing current and future challenges and opportunities.

This role is ideal for a warm and engaging leader who is strategically creative, flexible, forward-thinking, and innovative. They should be adept at managing change, comfortable working within a team, and embody the school's core values, serving as a great ambassador and advocate for West Buckland, thriving in its close-knit co-educational boarding and day community.

Location & Facilities

West Buckland School is nestled between Barnstaple and Exmoor, in the picturesque North Devon countryside. The school estate spans 100 acres of land, managed sustainably, and boasts outstanding facilities. The buildings are a harmonious blend of traditional and modern architecture, reflecting the school's rich history and forward-thinking approach. Biomass boilers and one of the largest school solar fields in the UK provide a significant portion of the heat and light to the buildings, underscoring the school's commitment to sustainability.

Sustainability initiatives are a core part of life at West Buckland School, with students actively participating in various projects within the grounds. The Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Garden is a prime example, where students grow fruit, vegetables, and flowers, fostering a hands-on approach to learning about sustainable practices. The school's deep connections to agriculture are evident in its curriculum and grounds management, emphasizing the importance of environmental stewardship.

Despite its idyllic countryside setting, West Buckland School is well-connected for travel. It is just 1.5 hours from Bristol Airport and 45 minutes from the M5 junction 27, making it accessible for connections further afield. This strategic location allows the school to maintain its rural charm while being conveniently situated for students and families from various regions.





Admissions & Pupil Profile

Students can join West Buckland School at various stages, with the usual entry points being nursery, reception, Year 7, or Year 12. However, we also welcome students in non-standard entry years and mid-year, ensuring flexibility in our admissions process. To enhance the customer experience and expedite the admissions process, we have streamlined our procedures with online registrations, contracts, and onboarding forms.

For younger students, we offer two taster days in Prep to help them acclimate to the school environment. Assessment tests are conducted for entry into Year 6, as well as senior school entry. This ensures that we understand each student's academic level and can provide the appropriate support and challenges.

West Buckland School is committed to making education accessible and rewarding. We offer means-tested bursaries and scholarships in Art, Music, Drama, Sport, and Academics at certain entry points. Additionally, we provide fee reductions for siblings and children of armed forces families, reflecting our dedication to supporting diverse family circumstances and promoting inclusivity within our school community.

We operate a network of coaches and minibuses throughout North Devon, enhancing accessibility across the region while upholding our commitment to sustainability and providing an environmentally-conscious education for our students. Our bus routes extend to Bideford, Braunton, Combe Martin, Lynton, North Molton, Tiverton, Witheridge, Chulmleigh, South Molton, and Barnstaple.

We also offer wraparound care for busy parents of children in EYFS and Prep School, with ad-hoc, flexi, weekly and full boarding also available from Year 5 upwards.

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A nurturing education that focuses on the outdoors and focuses on the individual needs of each child.

Talk Education

Academics & the Curriculum

Central to West Buckland's educational philosophy is the belief in challenging pupils to push their limits, embrace risks, persist through difficulties, and learn from their mistakes. The staff have crafted a curriculum designed to unlock potential, foster talent, and nurture the creative and cognitive abilities of each child. From nursery through to Year 6, all pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment, to stretch and develop each child in all ways, such as beach cleans, surfing, trips, house competitions, visiting speakers and other events.

We educate the whole child, have an innovative curriculum which is broad and deep, ensuring pupils have the opportunity to find their passion and develop to their full potential. Our five values of honesty, respect, curiosity, resilience and kindness are at the heart of all we do. We encourage pupils to be inquisitive, to question and to become increasingly independent in their learning.

In Prep 1 to 4 the class tutor remains central to each child's academic progress and pastoral welfare and teach the children most of their lessons. As the child gets older, specialist teaching takes place in Art, Design, Sport, Drama and Languages. Our small class sizes enable every child to thrive.

Our unique location and vast campus allow the children to use their natural surroundings to enhance their learning, through having lessons outside, forest school, or on field trips to our beautiful coast and Exmoor National Park.

At West Buckland School, every child matters.

The Personal Learning Department, provides comprehensive support to ensure all students can fully access the curriculum and achieve their full potential. Our dedicated team works closely with each student to identify their unique needs and tailor support strategies accordingly. This personalised approach not only enhances academic performance but also boosts confidence and fosters a love for learning. By offering targeted assistance and fostering an inclusive environment, we empower every student to thrive and succeed in their educational journey.

West Buckland School provides a rich and diverse array of academic and extracurricular activities, and provides every child with a voice that is heard, through small class sizes and through developing confidence in presenting and public speaking, starting with the annual house competition where each child takes part as an individual and as part of a class performance.





Sport, the Arts & Enrichment Activities

SPORT

Sport is a vital part of life at West Buckland School, with a proud tradition of producing international athletes across a wide range of disciplines. From Rugby, Hockey, Cricket, and Tennis for boys, and Hockey, Netball, and Tennis for girls, with Football being introduced in September '25 — all supported by a full programme of training, lessons, and competitive fixtures across the South West. Our seniors run masterclass lessons for juniors, providing younger students with guidance and mentoring from their older peers.

At the heart of our sporting ethos is a commitment to developing every student's potential, whether they are aspiring athletes or simply enjoy staying active. We encourage participation at all levels, fostering teamwork, resilience, and confidence through sport. Our inclusive approach ensures that every pupil, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to engage, improve, and thrive in a supportive environment.

Our outstanding facilities allow us to offer a wide variety of additional sports, including Football, Athletics, Swimming, Squash, Basketball, Dance, Martial Arts, and more. Many of our students compete at county and district level, and our programme supports not only physical fitness and competition, but also well-being and mental health.

CREATIVE ARTS

The West Buckland Art department builds the fundamental skills in a dedicated art space, leading pupils toward artistic independence, guiding pupils through briefs that inspire a diverse array of media and artwork. From drawing and painting to digital art, ceramics, textiles, printmaking, and photography, our pupils gain experience in a wide range of media, developing their unique style. We proudly showcase their talents through exhibitions open to both parents and pupils.

Our Design and Technology curriculum integrates various materials and cutting-edge technologies, including 3D laser printers and cutters, as well as professional CAD software. This comprehensive approach equips pupils with the skills and knowledge to innovate and excel in their creative pursuits, preparing them for future success in the arts and design fields.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

West Buckland School offers a diverse array of clubs and activities in the creative arts, allowing pupils to engage in these fields even if they do not choose to study them formally. From Art and Design Technology to Music and Drama, there is something to spark every child's interest. These opportunities ensure that all pupils can explore their passions and develop new skills, fostering a vibrant and inclusive community where creativity thrives.

PERFORMING ARTS

Our annual programme of productions provides students of all ages with diverse opportunities to perform on stage. The Creative Zone initiative involves pupils across the school and culminates in a Summer Term showcase. Junior students regularly participate in musicals and plays, with opportunities to be part of the whole school theatre productions.

The Prep School stage an annual production that all pupils are able to participate in, preparing pupils to later join the large-scale musical production put on by the senior school every two years at professional venues such as the Queen's Theatre in Barnstaple and the Landmark Theatre in Ilfracombe. These acclaimed performances showcase the impressive abilities of our actors, singers, and musicians, while also offering students hands-on experience in stagecraft, including lighting, sound, props, and stage management.

As a through-school, prep students have further opportunities to see senior drama matinee performances and have continuity when moving through to senior school, where drama is a core part of the curriculum and many students also pursue individual or small group lessons in speech and drama, preparing for LAMDA and Vanguard exams and participating in the North Devon Festival.

Since the opening of the 150 Theatre in 2015, both prep and senior students have benefited from excellent facilities that support both performance and production skill development.



Pastoral Care, Health & Wellbeing

Our pastoral support team is robust, with pupils assigned to a House to cultivate a strong sense of community and team spirit. The curriculum includes lessons on personal hygiene, online safety, positive lifestyles, diet, and exercise, ensuring students are well-informed and prepared for various aspects of life. We offer a wide range of clubs, providing ample opportunities for students to engage with peers from diverse backgrounds and interests.

In addition to our comprehensive curriculum, we have a qualified grief counsellor, quiet spaces for reflection, and access to external counsellors for those who may need additional support. Our commitment to student well-being is evident in the extensive resources and support systems we have in place.

With abundant outdoor spaces, a gym, swimming pool, sports facilities, and numerous clubs, our community is exceptionally supportive. We strive to create an environment where every student feels valued and empowered, fostering their growth academically, socially, and personally.



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A school for the careful and the courageous, the modestly brilliant and the brilliantly modest.”





Boarding

Our boarding students benefit from the support of an exceptional team of boarding parents and onsite staff, all dedicated to creating a positive and enriching experience. With modern, well-equipped rooms and boarding available from Years 5 to 13, we boast a diverse and dynamic boarding community.

Boyer House offers both single and shared rooms for students in Years 5 to 11, while Parkers House provides single en-suite accommodation in a contemporary, eco-friendly setting. We offer adhoc, flexi, weekly and full boarding from Year 5 upwards. We also offer wrap-around care for busy parents.

To ensure our boarders have a fulfilling and engaging experience, we offer a vibrant weekend activity schedule. These activities provide opportunities to explore the wider area and enjoy a broad range of options, catering to various interests and preferences. Our commitment to a well-rounded boarding experience helps students feel at home and fosters a sense of community and belonging.

Through these efforts, we aim to create a nurturing environment where boarding students can thrive academically, socially, and personally. The combination of excellent facilities, dedicated staff, and diverse activities ensures that our boarders are well-supported and able to make the most of their time at West Buckland School.

The Wider Community

We are deeply integrated into the wider community, hosting sporting and other events for our alumni network through the Foundation. Our choir visit local care homes and towns at Christmas and pupils participate in fundraising and charity events for our sponsored charity.

We foster a strong sense of community in our pupils, through choral and band support in local churches, special open air events and festivals in local towns, as well as Devon County Show.

These strong relationships enable us to give back to the community and provide our students with opportunities to understand their role within society. We recognise the circular economy, with West Buckland School at its heart, where many alumni have become business owners and job creators for the next generation.

We proudly acknowledge our place within the community and continually strive to strengthen these connections. Through our various programmes and initiatives, we aim to foster a sense of belonging and responsibility in our students, ensuring they are well-prepared to contribute positively to the world around them.





Governance and Leadership

There are currently 10 Governors who meet as a full Board at least three times a year. There are Governors' sub-committees that oversee different aspects of school life – including, currently the Finance Committee, the Education Committee, and Governance Committee plus a Commercial Working Group.

The regulatory responsibilities of being a Governor are taken very seriously by them. Although proactive by nature and practice, the Governors remain cognisant of an “eyes on, hands off” approach. An annual ISI compliance audit takes place, which reports directly to the Head and the Board.

Parents, pupils and staff are also surveyed annually, and the results of these surveys are shared with the Board.

Governors are appointed on a skills matrix basis and are allocated departmental areas to oversee, as well as individual regulatory policies, which are formally reviewed annually. In addition, Governors with relevant allocated responsibility will assist with internal inspections. For example, the Boarding Governor will assist in a boarding house inspection, and Teaching & Learning Governors will help out in academic departmental inspections, which take place on a rolling programme.

There are also termly staff and governors meeting.

The SLT consists of the Head, Prep Head, Deputy Head (Academic), Deputy Head (Pastoral), the Bursar and other senior staff members. The full team meets once a week and is a cohesive and high-performing unit.

The SLT manages all areas of school life and has regular line management meetings within their respective areas of responsibility.

All SLT members are trained to Level 2 Safeguarding standard and have formal safeguarding meetings termly while proactively supporting one another when safeguarding issues arise.

Members of the SLT also undertake active weekday duties, supervising one weekday duty each, and resident SLT members do evening and weekend cover on an evenly distributed rota.

The Role

The Governors are delighted to announce the opportunity to become the Head of Prep at West Buckland School, following a period of committed leadership from the Acting Head. The Governors are looking for someone seeking a new and exciting challenge at this well-regarded school. The position would suit a current Head of Prep in a through school, or an ambitious and experienced Deputy Head.

The Prep School forms part of West Buckland School, which is in an idyllic location in North Devon. The next Head of Prep will have the opportunity to work with a new Head to continue the long history of the school. Founded in 1858 with the motto 'Read and Reap', the Prep School was an addition in 1969. Accommodation is available on site for the successful candidate; the post would suit someone ready to immerse themselves in the friendly community of the school.

Since its inception, the Prep School has provided the opportunity for pupils to begin their West Buckland journey from Nursery through to 18. The Head of Prep reports directly to the Head, and the Governors are seeking someone who is keen to work closely and collaboratively with the Head.

The newly appointed Head of Prep will develop a forward-thinking, dynamic strategy for growth and success which will form part of a wider, whole-school strategy. An ability to bring a sound understanding of the current pressures facing independent education, and to grasp directly the specific needs of the Prep School, will be key.

The next Head of Prep will be an exemplary communicator, committed to promoting and growing the Prep. Displaying a visible, dynamic and engaging leadership style, the successful candidate will join at a time of change for the school and will relish the opportunity to be a part of that change.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

The Head of Prep will:

- *Be a strategic thinker with the ability to create and communicate a strategy for the Prep, as well as other changes in the independent Prep School arena.*
- *Possess the ability to consider and contribute to the whole school strategy, ensuring that the Prep School is fully aligned with the wider school strategy.*
- *Report to Governors on the Prep strategy, priorities and recommended developments, enabling them to make informed decisions about the Prep School.*
- *Demonstrate the ability to both inspire others and listen to the ideas of others in the effective delivery and embedding of the prep strategy.*
- *Understand the role of the Prep School in a through school and ensure that the Prep School's identity is both distinctive and a part of the wider school.*

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Head of Prep will:

- *Possess a full and in-depth understanding of how children learn and develop, including a demonstrable understanding of the EYFS.*
- *Know the current trends and developments in curricula for the Pre-Prep and Prep age groups and be able to make reasoned decisions about suitable curricula.*
- *Demonstrate a committed approach to the safeguarding and care of all pupils and to place their wellbeing at the heart of their leadership.*
- *Stay abreast of and champion changing technology to ensure that any educational strategy includes the benefits of AI, including in adaptive teaching.*
- *Lead and develop the Prep School curriculum and implement strategies to ensure a cycle of review and evaluation is carried out effectively and that any issues arising are managed swiftly and with decisiveness.*
- *Empower staff through a robust professional development programme ensuring that delivery of the academic and pastoral curricula is engaging, inspiring and fit for a 21st century school.*



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ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL ACUITY

The Head of Prep will:

- *Lead the Prep School in its contribution to driving the whole school forward through an understanding of the local market and have the confidence to investigate new revenue streams and to deliver on these as the Prep School evolves.*
- *Work proactively with the Head, senior team, and the marketing and admissions team to set ambitious targets in pupil numbers and play an active part in the promotion of the Prep School to achieve these targets.*
- *Show an understanding of budgeting and financial forecasting so that the Prep School is on a sound and strong footing financially and be able to answer any questions from Governors.*
- *Work closely with the Head and Bursar on any fee remission policy and ensure that Prep School pupils are fairly represented as part of the whole picture of fee remissions.*
- *Be an ambassador for the Prep School in any fund-raising activities and seek ways to involve the whole Prep community in any such activities.*

WORKING WITH PEOPLE

The Head of Prep will:

- *Have a proven ability to communicate confidently and effectively with all members of the Prep and wider school community.*
- *Develop and maintain strong relationships with the Governors, senior teams in the Prep and Senior School and the school community as a whole.*
- *Recognise the importance of relationships with parents at the Prep school and make time to listen to them, particularly as they begin their journeys as parents of school-age children.*
- *With the Head, engage fully with the Foundation and the school's alumni body, the 'Old West Buckland Association' and lead opportunities for developing strong bonds between the members of the associations and the Prep School staff and pupils.*
- *Be a visible, friendly and engaging leader whose presence around the Prep School provides staff, pupils and parents with a clear embodiment of the school's values and ethos.*
- *Value and earn the respect of the Prep School community, nurturing relationships to create a positive and happy environment.*
- *Possess the ability to make well-considered decisions and to share these with relevant staff and other members of the community, as well as ensuring that the Head is fully cognisant of those decisions.*



The Person

The Head of Prep will:

- *Have a good degree and other educational qualifications relevant to Prep School teaching and leadership.*
- *Be an experienced Head of Prep in a through school or senior leader in a Prep School. The post is suitable for applications from leaders in both independent and state schools.*
- *Display high levels of integrity and transparency in relationships with others and be an inspirational presence to all members of the Prep and wider school community.*
- *Demonstrate a real passion and energy for excellence in Prep education ensuring the highest standards are always maintained.*
- *Have an open, approachable manner as a leader; show empathy and compassion but be able to be firm when making challenging decisions or managing those who fall below the required standards.*
- *Be courageous and creative in looking at how the Prep School can develop in the future and have the drive and enthusiasm to ensure that ideas come to fruition.*
- *Have a proven record as an outstanding practitioner and be keen to continue to teach and model excellence in the classroom.*

Terms & Conditions

The Head of Prep will receive a competitive package, with a base salary dependent on experience.

Accommodation is available on site as part of the package.

Further benefits include a competitive pension contribution and generous fee discount.

OTHER BENEFITS

West Buckland School is committed to the well-being of our employees. We are proud to offer a comprehensive benefits programme that provides high-quality options for the health, wellbeing and financial security of our staff.

Some of the benefits we offer include:

- Flexible pension options
- Life assurance
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Health & Wellbeing Support Services
- Personal Accident Plan
- Fee remission
- Cycle to Work scheme
- Motorsave scheme
- Shopping discounts
- Eye Care
- Enhanced occupational allowances
- Pool and sports facilities
- CPD





Application Process

The search for a new Head of Prep for West Buckland School is being led by the Interim Head, Mrs Helen Lowe.

Interested candidates are invited to contact the HR Manager, Mrs Jacqui Cornaby at recruitment@westbuckland.com, or 01598 760189, to arrange an initial confidential discussion with Mrs Helen Lowe.

**CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS:
5.00PM ON WEDNESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Applications should be made electronically to recruitment@westbuckland.com.

You should submit the following:

- A completed application form, either via TES or available on the West Buckland School website - <https://westbuckland.com/about/vacancies>
- A covering letter addressed to Mrs Helen Lowe, Interim Head. The letter should explain your reasons for applying.

- All applications will be acknowledged by email.
- Longlist interviews will take place on 24th September 2025.
- Shortlist interviews will take place on 2nd October 2025.

**N.B. SAFER RECRUITMENT CHECKS WILL
BE MADE AT ALL STAGES IN THE
RECRUITMENT PROCESS.**



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Thank you