



THE
KING'S SCHOOL
CANTERBURY

Brief for the appointment of

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



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About The King's School Canterbury

The King's School Canterbury is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils aged 3 to 18, where tradition and innovation sit comfortably alongside one another in a setting shaped by more than 1,400 years of education.

Today King's operates as a group of schools. In Canterbury there are three schools serving pupils from nursery through to Sixth Form. The wider King's family also includes franchise schools overseas: two in Shenzhen (China) and one in Phnom Penh (Cambodia), with further schools scheduled to open in Cairo (Egypt) and Bengaluru (India). These partnerships extend the reach of the King's name internationally while maintaining close alignment with the ethos and standards of the Canterbury schools.

Across the group, the schools share a commitment to academic ambition, a rich co-curricular life, and strong pastoral care.

With a significant international intake, King's combines the character of a traditional British school with a modern and outward-looking perspective.

The Canterbury schools are particularly well known for music, creativity and drama, which remain central to the life of the school. Alongside this, King's continues to develop its educational provision, facilities and international partnerships, ensuring that the school remains both rooted in its long history and responsive to the opportunities and challenges of contemporary education.





The King's Schools

The King's School is located within a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the heart of the historic cathedral city of Canterbury, Kent. Steeped in history, the school occupies a number of sites across the city, with its centre in the Cathedral Precincts. There are currently around 920 pupils on roll, a number that continues to grow and is expected to reach around 950 in the coming year. Approximately 670 pupils are boarders, reflecting the school's strong boarding tradition.

Pupils live in six boys' boarding houses, seven girls' boarding houses and four day houses, the newest of which opened in 2025 to support the school's recent growth. King's attracts pupils from across the UK and internationally, and the diversity of the pupil body is an important and valued part of life at the school.

Junior King's School occupies an 80-acre site on the banks of the River Stour in Sturry, three miles from Canterbury. Founded in 1879, the school originally operated in the centre of Canterbury before moving to its present site in 1929, when the new school was opened by Rudyard Kipling. Today the campus combines extensive grounds and modern facilities with historic buildings including a sixteenth-century Manor House and Tithe Barn.

The King's International College, established in 2018, provides a specialist pathway for international pupils aged 13-17 preparing to enter the British education system. Located in a purpose-built, award-winning building on the Malthouse campus, the College currently educates around 70 pupils each year. It offers an intensive one-year GCSE programme designed to develop English language fluency and academic readiness, with many pupils progressing into the King's senior school. Adjacent to the College is a modern sports centre, widely used by pupils across the schools and particularly noted for fencing.

Across its Canterbury schools, King's is a substantial and complex organisation. The group employs more than 1,000 staff across teaching, pastoral, operational and support roles, making it one of the largest employers in the local area. The school also manages a large and historically significant estate spread across multiple sites in Canterbury and Sturry, requiring careful stewardship and ongoing investment. Alongside the day-to-day running of the schools, King's continues to develop its facilities, expand its educational provision and support the growth of its international partnerships.

Overseas Schools

The King's School Canterbury has developed a growing network of international partner schools, extending the ethos and educational approach of King's to a wider global community. These schools are established in partnership with leading educational organisations and combine the academic traditions of King's with strong local programmes, providing pupils with a rigorous and internationally minded education.

Shenzhen, China

The first overseas King's school opened in Shenzhen. The Pre-Prep opened in 2019, with the Prep and Senior School fully operational since September 2022. The school offers excellent modern facilities for both day and boarding pupils and delivers a curriculum that combines the academic traditions of King's with a strong Chinese programme.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The second international school opened in Phnom Penh in August 2023, located within the Vattanacville development in the city centre. The school currently offers a British international education for pupils aged 3–13 and is expanding year groups progressively as it develops towards a full K–12 provision.

Cairo, Egypt

The King's School Canterbury, Cairo is being established in partnership with New Era Education. The school will open with a Nursery in January 2027, followed by the launch of a full K–12 campus in 2028.

Bengaluru, India

The King's School Canterbury, Bengaluru is being developed in partnership with Vidyanidhi Education Trust. The school will open with a Pre-Prep before expanding to a purpose-built Prep and Senior School campus scheduled to open in 2029.





Aims and Ethos

With origins dating back to 597 AD, The King's School Canterbury is widely regarded as the oldest school in the world. Throughout its long history, the school has remained committed to the same central purpose: to offer an outstanding education that honours its inheritance while continuing to evolve to meet the needs of each new generation.

At King's, academic ambition sits alongside a rich and varied co-curricular life. This balance lies at the heart of the school's philosophy. Pupils are encouraged not only to acquire knowledge but to think independently, develop resilience and curiosity, and discover the interests and talents that will shape their lives beyond school.

Equally important is the strength of the school's pastoral care. Within a supportive and well-structured community, pupils develop confidence and self-belief while learning the importance of respect, responsibility and compassion for others.

The result is a distinctive educational environment: one that combines deep tradition with a forward-looking outlook, a strong sense of place in Canterbury with an increasingly international perspective, and a commitment to both intellectual challenge and the full development of every individual pupil.

Facilities

The school's estate is both distinctive and extensive, combining buildings of considerable

historic significance with modern, purpose-built facilities. Situated throughout the centre of Canterbury, the Senior School has often been described as a "university for young people," with teaching, boarding and co-curricular spaces woven into the fabric of the city.

At its heart are the Cathedral Precincts and Green Court, where many of the school's principal buildings stand alongside the ruins of St Augustine's Abbey, both part of Canterbury's UNESCO World Heritage Site. Several boarding houses occupy historic buildings dating back to the fifteenth century, while recent investment has ensured that pupils benefit from outstanding contemporary facilities, including the new Science Centre opened in 2023.

Creative subjects are housed across a number of specialist spaces. The Malthouse campus, a short walk from the main school, contains theatre, dance and drama studios centred on the renovated 334-seat Malthouse Theatre. Art is based at Blackfriars, a converted Dominican priory, while Ceramics and Photography are taught at the King's Street Studios and Design and Technology at St Radigund's Street.

Sport is supported by three major dedicated sites: the playing fields at Birley's, the sports centre at Blore's, and Westbere Lake, where water sports take place. Together these facilities provide pupils with exceptional opportunities across a wide range of activities.

The Opportunity

The King's School Canterbury is entering a significant new phase in its development, with continued growth across its schools in Canterbury and an expanding network of international partnerships.

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) will play a pivotal role in this next chapter, leading the development of the operational structures and shared services that will support the group's increasing scale and complexity. With more than 1,000 staff, a substantial and historically significant estate across multiple sites, and a growing portfolio of schools, the role offers the opportunity to help shape the operational framework of one of the country's most distinctive and ambitious educational institutions.

Reporting to the Head and working closely with Governors and senior leaders across the group, this is an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the future direction of King's.

The COO will provide strategic leadership across the school's professional services, ensuring that the organisation's systems, resources and infrastructure are aligned to support its educational mission, sustain its historic estate, and enable the continued growth and success of the King's School Canterbury Group of Schools.

The COO is closely assisted by the following staff:

- **Deputy COO (currently Deputy Bursar)** – with direct responsibility to the COO for IT, Catering, Premises, and HR.
- **Director of Operations** – with direct responsibility to the COO for the Sports Centre, Gardens and Grounds, Domestic Services, and Security.





Other departments will be directly managed by the COO.

Strategic Leadership and Contribution to the Group

As a member of the senior leadership team, the COO will play a key role in the strategic leadership of The King's School Canterbury Group, contributing to the development and delivery of the school's long-term ambitions.

- Work closely with the Head, Governors and senior leaders to support the strategic development of the Group.
- Contribute to whole-school planning and major organisational initiatives.
- Support the continued development of the Group's international partnerships and schools.
- Lead and support major cross-school projects and organisational change where required.
- Represent the school in external partnerships and professional networks where appropriate.
- Foster strong collaboration across the schools and operational teams within the Group.

Strategic Oversight of Shared Services

The COO will lead the development of a coherent and effective shared services model across The King's School Canterbury Group, ensuring that professional services operate efficiently, collaboratively and at a consistently high standard across all schools.

- Provide strategic leadership for the Group's professional services functions, ensuring they are aligned with the wider ambitions of The King's School Canterbury Group.
- Develop and strengthen shared services across the Group, enabling expertise, systems and resources to be effectively coordinated while respecting the distinctive character of each school.
- Establish clear operational structures, standards and service expectations across teams to ensure consistency, resilience and efficiency.
- Work closely with school leaders to ensure that operational services support the educational mission of each school and the wider development of the Group.
- Lead the continued development of systems, processes and organisational structures capable of supporting a growing and increasingly international group of schools.

Estates & Domestic Management

Working closely with the Deputy COO, the COO will provide strategic oversight of the extensive and historically significant estate of The King's School Canterbury Group, ensuring that the school's buildings, grounds and facilities continue to support both the educational mission and long-term development of the Group.

- Lead the long-term stewardship and development of the King's estate across multiple sites in Canterbury and at Sturry.
- Oversee the strategic planning and delivery of capital projects, including refurbishment, new developments and infrastructure improvements.
- Ensure that the estate is maintained to the highest standards of safety, functionality and presentation.
- Develop and implement long-term estate strategies that balance preservation of historic buildings with the needs of a modern and evolving school.
- Provide oversight of domestic operations across the estate, ensuring that boarding houses, teaching spaces and communal areas maintain the standards expected of a leading boarding school.
- Lead the continued development of sustainable and environmentally responsible approaches to estate management.

Health, Safety & Risk Management

With the assistance of the Director of Compliance, the COO will provide strategic oversight of health, safety and risk management across The King's School Canterbury Group, ensuring that the highest standards of safety, compliance and operational resilience are maintained across all schools and sites.

- Provide leadership for the Group's approach to health, safety and regulatory compliance, ensuring adherence to all relevant legislation and best practice.
- Oversee the development and implementation of policies and procedures that safeguard pupils, staff and visitors across all campuses.
- Work closely with the Director of Compliance and specialist teams to maintain effective risk management frameworks across the organisation.
- Ensure that robust systems are in place to identify, assess and mitigate operational risks across the Group's activities and estate.
- Promote a strong culture of safety, accountability and continuous improvement across all operational teams.
- Hold and discharge the responsibilities assigned to the COO under the School's Health and Safety Policy.





Operational Services

The COO will provide strategic oversight of key operational services across The King's School Canterbury Group, ensuring that the school's facilities and services support the daily life of the schools while maintaining the high standards expected of a leading boarding school.

- Along with the Deputy COO, provide leadership and oversight of core operational services across the Group, ensuring efficient, reliable and high-quality delivery.
- Oversee catering services across the King's sites, ensuring the provision of high-quality food and dining for pupils, staff and visitors while promoting sustainable and cost-effective practices.
- Ensure the effective management of security across the school's estate, maintaining a safe and secure environment for pupils, staff and visitors.
- Oversee the strategic and operational management of the School's dual-use Sports Centre, ensuring excellent sports and wellbeing provision for pupils while supporting appropriate community access.
- Ensure that operational services are delivered efficiently and represent good stewardship of the school's resources.

- Support the continued development of systems and processes that enable the schools to operate smoothly and effectively.

Information Technology (IT) & Digital Strategy

The COO will provide strategic oversight of information technology and digital infrastructure across The King's School Canterbury Group, ensuring that systems and platforms support both the educational mission of the schools and the effective operation of the wider organisation.

- Lead the development and implementation of the Group's IT and digital strategy.
- Ensure robust, secure and future-ready digital infrastructure across all schools and sites.
- Oversee cybersecurity, data protection and digital resilience across the organisation.
- Ensure that technology effectively supports teaching, learning and administrative operations.
- Promote the effective use of digital systems and data to support collaboration, efficiency and informed decision-making.

Relations with Local Community

- Liaise with the Canterbury local Community Associations, Canterbury Town Council, Local Residents Association and other local bodies to promote good “town and gown” relations.

Human Resources

The COO will provide strategic oversight of human resources across The King’s School Canterbury Group, ensuring that the School continues to attract, develop and retain outstanding staff.

- Support the recruitment, development and retention of the School’s 800 professional services staff, fostering a culture of professionalism and excellence.

- Provide leadership oversight of the Group’s HR strategy, ensuring that policies and practices support the long-term development of the organisation.
- Ensure that the School’s People Strategy is clearly communicated and embedded across the organisation.
- Act as a trusted adviser to the Head and Governors on workforce planning, organisational development and staffing matters.
- Support a positive and collaborative working environment for the School’s teaching and support staff across the Group.



The Individual

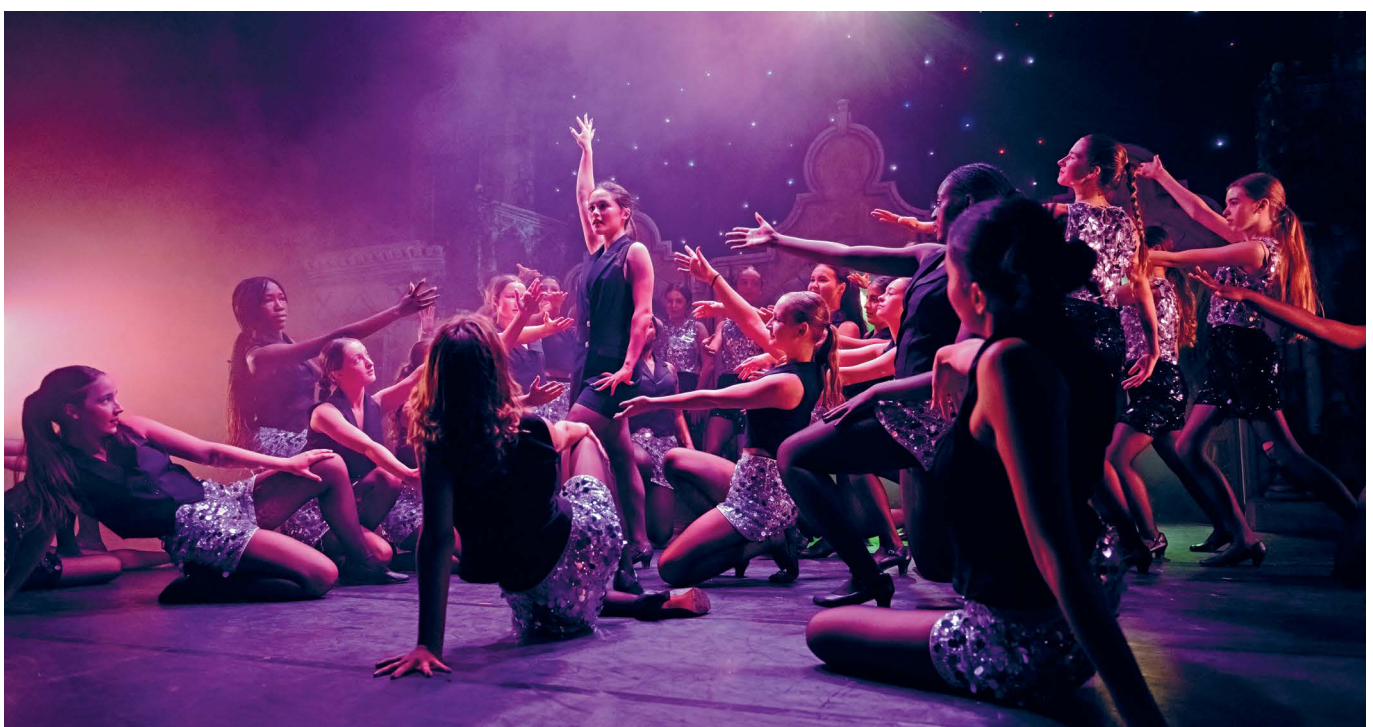
The successful candidate will demonstrate the following experience, knowledge, skills and attributes.

Qualifications

- University graduate.
- Evidence of continual professional development.

Experience

- Significant commercial and/or educational experience in senior operational management.
- Proven operational management experience in group, multi-site, or related business environments.
- Senior-level leadership of large, diverse teams in a service-driven setting.
- Track record in strategy setting and working effectively with Boards, Directors, or Governing Bodies, confident and effective operating at board level.
- Knowledge of (or demonstrated ability to learn) charity and education regulatory frameworks and relevant legislation.
- Experience developing, implementing, and evaluating policies and procedures.
- Demonstrated ability to meet deadlines and deliver results through effective organisation and planning.
- Extensive managerial experience, including leading multi-disciplinary teams.
- Strong financial acumen with experience managing budgets to ensure best value.
- Experience providing strategic operational advice and high-quality management information.
- Strong operational and strategic insight, including long-term planning and day-to-day operational oversight.
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills with a proactive, positive approach to change management.



Skills and Knowledge

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Ability to contribute to wider strategic development while maintaining a strong grasp of operational detail.
- Strong interpersonal skills with the ability to build relationships at all levels.
- Leads by example; able to empower others and command respect among colleagues and stakeholders.
- Able to present information clearly, logically and concisely to a range of audiences.
- Calm under pressure with strong interpersonal resilience.
- A collaborative leader and motivator who is adaptable, diplomatic, articulate, innovative, and enthusiastic.
- Understanding of the demands of an independent, co-educational, academic (including boarding) school environment.
- Genuinely aligned with the values and purpose of education, and committed to supporting the wider life of the School.

Personal Attributes

- Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- A strong team player with a practical, "can-do," hands-on approach when needed.
- Highly committed to excellence in service of students and staff.
- Pragmatic, organised, and effective, with sound judgement across a broad range of projects.
- Able to lead and motivate established multi-disciplinary teams using diplomacy, open-mindedness, and strong influencing skills.
- Able to think and plan strategically while engaging confidently with operational detail.
- Confident yet humble, with a strong moral code and social conscience.



Living in Canterbury

King's sits at the heart of Canterbury, with many of the school's buildings gathered around Green Court within the Cathedral Precincts. The result is a setting that is both remarkable and practical: a calm and collegiate environment within the centre of a historic and lively city.

Canterbury itself is a compact and attractive cathedral city with a strong cultural life and two universities. The River Stour runs through its centre, and the city combines historic streets and architecture with a wide range of shops, restaurants and theatres.

The surrounding countryside is particularly beautiful, with the villages and woodland of east Kent close by and the coastline, with bustling towns like Whitstable, Deal, Margate and Folkestone only a short journey away.

Canterbury is also well connected. High-speed trains reach London St Pancras in under an hour, while the M20 and M25 provide straightforward road access to London and the wider South East. Dover and Folkestone are nearby, offering easy links to continental Europe.

Benefits

Salary

Competitive.

Professional Development

Funded training and CPD opportunities.

Annual Leave

25 days holiday, plus 8 bank holidays and 2 Bursary days.

Pension

The school offers a generous defined contribution salary sacrifice pension scheme with the option of enhanced contributions through Royal London.

Life Assurance

All employees are automatically enrolled into a life assurance scheme that pays benefits to dependents.

Enhanced Family Leave Entitlements

The school supports colleagues to balance work and life and offer enhanced maternity, paternity and adoption benefits.

Employee Assistance Programme

A free confidential helpline available 7 days a week, 365 days a year and the option of accessing face to face counselling.

Sports Centre

All employees have gold membership with access to the pool, gym and other facilities.

Cycle to Work Scheme

The school operate a salary sacrifice cycle scheme which could provide savings of up to 40%, dependent on salary and cycle cost.

Eye Care

Regular VDU users can receive a financial contribution to the cost of both eye tests and glasses.

Financial Advice

King's facilitates regular free impartial financial advice to all employees.

Lunch

Staff enjoy lunch together in the school dining rooms during term time.

Fee remission

Fee remission is available, subject to entry criteria.



How to Apply

The King's School Canterbury has engaged the services of Odgers to assist with the recruitment of the Chief Operating Officer (COO).

The closing date for applications is **9.00am GMT Monday 20 April 2026**.

Shortlist interviews with the Selection Committee will take place during **week commencing 27 April**. Candidates invited to the final stage will be invited to have a full briefing visit to the school during **week commencing 4 May** and final interviews will take place during **week commencing 11 May**.

In order to apply, please submit a completed application form and CV, along with 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/95642

All applications will receive an automated response.

For an initial discussion, please contact:

Freddie Dennis: freddie.dennis@odgers.com

Ruth Lewis: ruth.lewis@odgers.com

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.

Safeguarding

The King's School Canterbury is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Applicants will be required to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The School may carry out online searches on shortlisted applicants and applicants will be required to provide details of their online profile, including social media accounts, as part of their application.

The post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. The School is therefore permitted to ask job applicants to declare all convictions and cautions on a self-declaration form in advance of attending an interview (including those which are "spent" unless they are "protected" under the DBS filtering rules) in order to assess their suitability to work with children.

Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion and Equality

The King's School Canterbury is committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive community where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. The School seeks to recruit staff who share the school's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and who are dedicated to creating an environment in which every pupil and colleague can thrive.



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