

jags

James Allen's Girls' School

Brief for the appointment of

Head

ODGERS 



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The School

As the oldest independent girls' school in London, James Allen's Girls' School (JAGS) offers an outstanding academic education, combined with co-curricular excellence in the creative and performing arts and in sport, to around 1,200 girls aged 4 to 18. The school was founded in 1741 by James Allen, then Master of the College of God's Gift, who established the Dulwich Reading School in the centre of the village with the aim of educating local children. Unusually for the time, this provision included girls, who were taught to 'read and sew'. The school remains part of the historic Dulwich Foundation, alongside Alleyn's School and Dulwich College, and benefits from strong collaborative relationships across the Foundation Schools and the wider educational community.



BACKGROUND

In 1886, the school moved to its present 22-acre site on East Dulwich Grove, where it remains today. Founded on a long-standing tradition of diversity and access, JAGS is a genuine reflection of modern South London life. The school's community is enriched by a substantial and generous bursary programme that enables girls from a wide range of social, cultural and economic backgrounds to access a JAGS education. It combines a strong sense of community with high intellectual ambition, underpinned by clear shared values and a sustained commitment to all-round excellence.

The quality of education and pastoral care at JAGS is consistently recognised in inspection outcomes, and the school has gone from strength to strength in recent years, being named The Sunday Times London Independent School of the Year 2024.

AIMS & APPROACH

JAGS places great emphasis on shared values, including kindness, authenticity and inclusion. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of the world beyond the

school and to understand their responsibilities within it, both now and in the future.

Teachers are highly qualified and deeply committed to their subjects. They support pupils to become confident, articulate and independent learners, equipped to play an active role in society. Intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for lifelong learning are strongly encouraged, alongside balance and perspective.

Diversity is one of the school's defining strengths. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, and the Senior School's means-tested bursary provision supports girls throughout their time at JAGS, covering the full cost of fees as well as associated expenses. Community engagement has long been central to school life, with girls encouraged to contribute constructively to the wider South-East London community.

Above all, JAGS aims to help each pupil fulfil her potential in a supportive environment with a broad definition of success both in and out of the classroom; the school's Year 13 leavers are exceptional role models for this community.

THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

JAGS Junior School provides a rich and varied curriculum for girls in the Pre-Prep (age 4-7) and Prep (age 7-11) years. Warmth, happiness and energy are at the heart of daily life, and learning is designed to be both enjoyable and challenging.

Academic, creative and physical development are seen as closely connected. Teaching combines classroom-based learning with outdoor activity, particularly in the early years, and pupils are encouraged to explore their interests with confidence. A wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities is offered, including sport, languages and the arts, ensuring breadth of experience alongside academic foundations.

THE SENIOR SCHOOL

The Senior School at JAGS educates girls from age 11 to 18 and is extremely successful in fulfilling its academic aims. Girls benefit from a broad and stimulating curriculum throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, including separate sciences, modern and classical languages, humanities, digital and design technology, sport, creative arts and PSHCE, supported by an outstanding co-curricular offer.

Through lessons, informal discussion and enthusiastic participation in the many activities on offer, pupils' achievement is consistently excellent and success in all areas is recognised and valued. GCSE outcomes are consistently outstanding. In the most recent results, 51% of all grades were awarded at Grade 9, 77% at Grades 9 or 8, and around a third of pupils achieved straight Grade 9 or 8 results.

Recent bold academic developments have seen the introduction of 1:1 digital devices for all students, alongside an extensive curriculum review and restructure of the school day. In September 2026, the school will introduce a small number of 'Pathways' as an alternative academic offering to traditional GCSE courses.

JAGS also has an exceptional academic enrichment programme, 'Curriculum Plus', for all year groups in Key Stages 3 and 4. This is a curated series of courses, each designed by a specialist member of staff, to enhance learning beyond the assessed curriculum, developing the skills, knowledge and capabilities needed to navigate the uncertain and rapidly changing demands of a future workplace. Alongside academic study, pupils are encouraged to engage fully in the wider life of the school. Opportunities across sport, music, drama and the arts are extensive, and participation is high. Throughout the Senior School, girls are expected to contribute positively to the community, developing confidence, independence and a sense of responsibility as they prepare for the Sixth Form.





THE SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form plays an important role in supporting pupils as they consider their lives beyond JAGS. Girls are encouraged to have high aspirations, both academically and beyond the classroom, and to take increasing responsibility for their learning and personal development.

Students in the Sixth Form are organised in mixed Year 12 and Year 13 tutor groups which foster mutual support and leadership. Academic study at A Level is demanding and well supported, with students typically selecting three or four subjects from a broad range of options. Sixth Form study is complemented by a wide programme of enrichment, co-curricular activity and opportunities for wider intellectual engagement, including an extensive co-educational enrichment programme with nearby neighbours Dulwich College.

Examination results at JAGS consistently place the school amongst the leading girls' schools nationally. In the most recent A Level results, 39% of all grades were awarded at A*, 78% at A*-A, and 93% at A*-B, reflecting strong performance across the wide range of subjects.

The majority of leavers progress to university, studying a wide range of subjects including medicine, STEM disciplines, the humanities and the creative arts. Each year, students secure places at leading Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, alongside a growing range of international destinations. Alternative pathways, including degree apprenticeships and other professional routes, are also warmly supported.

A strong sense of leadership and social responsibility characterise Sixth Form life. Students are encouraged to recognise their place within the school and wider community and to contribute through charitable activity, outreach and partnership work at local, national and international levels.

PASTORAL

Pastoral care at JAGS is a notable strength. Academic and pastoral support are closely linked, ensuring that all individual pupils are well supported throughout their school career. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong, fostering trust, respect and a shared sense of purpose.

The school community is diverse, and respect for different beliefs and traditions is actively encouraged. Safeguarding and wellbeing are treated with care, respect and gravity, and pupils are known and supported as individuals.

SPORT

Sport is an important part of life at JAGS, and participation is actively encouraged at all levels. The school's provision is underpinned by excellent facilities and a wide programme that enables girls to engage in sport both competitively and recreationally.

Pupils compete regularly at school, county and regional levels, with particular strength in sports such as football, cross-country and swimming, where girls have represented the school at national competitions. Teams and individuals also compete successfully in athletics, netball, hockey, touch rugby, tennis, cricket, water polo, biathlon and rowing, and a number of pupils hold external representative honours. Multiple teams are fielded in most sports, ensuring that participation remains broad and inclusive rather than limited to elite cohorts.



THE ARTS

Drama, music and visual arts are well established and highly acclaimed at JAGS and are widely taken up across the school, with pupils encouraged to participate both as performers and creators, as well as behind the scenes.

Facilities are a significant strength. The school has a purpose-built theatre and a state-of-the-art Community Music Centre, which includes a 500-seat auditorium and 15 practice rooms. These facilities support a wide programme of concerts, productions and exhibitions throughout the year, and are also used by community groups and local organisations.

Music has a long-standing place at JAGS, with opportunities ranging from ensembles and choirs to individual tuition, and pupils regularly perform both within the school and more widely. The arts contribute not only to cultural life but also to confidence, collaboration and personal development.

COMMUNITY

JAGS is closely connected to its local community and has a long tradition of partnership and outreach, notably through its founding membership of the Southwark Schools Learning Partnership. The school's facilities are widely used beyond the school day, supporting programmes in sport, music, drama and adult education, and enabling sustained engagement with local schools and community groups.

Commitment to access remains central. In 2024–25, approximately 140 pupils were supported through bursaries funded in part by the Dulwich Estate, with total bursary and related assistance amounting to over £3m. In that period, 74% of bursaries awarded were for fee assistance of 90% or above. This provision is central to the school's ethos: it reflects a long-standing

strategic priority rather than a peripheral initiative.

Pupils are encouraged to contribute actively through mentoring, volunteering and charitable activity, and to understand their responsibilities within the wider South London community. Partnership work is purposeful and sustained, reinforcing the school's founding commitment to education as a public good.

GOVERNANCE

The Governors are the Trustees of James Allen's Girls' School and are collectively responsible for the school's long-term vision, strategic direction and financial sustainability. The Board brings a wide range of professional and educational experience and expertise and works closely with the Head, offering guidance and oversight in support of the school's leadership.

The Chair and Governors are strongly committed to the school's ethos, charitable purpose and educational standards, and take an active interest in ensuring that JAGS continues to thrive as an academically ambitious and socially purposeful institution. The relationship between Governors and the Head is characterised by trust, openness and a shared sense of responsibility for the flourishing of the school. The Board is keen for its relationship with the Head to be characterised by creative and thoughtful dialogue.

Whilst the school is a proud member of the Dulwich Foundation Schools, the three schools are separate entities which are each independently led and governed.

Further information on James Allen's Girls' School can be found via the school's website:

<https://www.jags.org.uk/>



The Role

The Head of James Allen's Girls' School is responsible, subject to the direction of the Governors and within financial parameters approved by them, for the overall leadership, management and educational direction of the whole school.

The Head leads the delivery of an excellent education to approximately 1,200 girls across the Junior School and Senior School, and has oversight of a community of more than 200 staff. Working with the Board of Governors, the Head is also responsible for the school's strategic development, so as to ensure both its ongoing commercial resilience within a competitive market and that JAGS remains a leading force within all-girls' education. The role involves close engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including Governors, pupils, parents, staff, alumnae, partner schools, the Dulwich Estate, external agencies and donors.



The school is a member of the Girls' Schools Association (GSA) and the Heads' Conference (HMC), the Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS), the Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA) and the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS). JAGS is a Church of England foundation, although pupils of all faiths and none are welcomed. The Head is expected to be comfortable leading assemblies of a broadly Christian character and contributing to services within the school and across the Dulwich Foundation schools.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- ◆ To support and advance the aims of the school by sustaining standards of excellence and fostering an ethos in which pupils and staff are motivated to work together to the best of their abilities.
- ◆ To provide clear educational leadership and strategic direction, ensuring that the school continues to thrive academically while remaining true to its values and charitable purpose.

- ◆ To represent and promote the school with credibility and confidence to external stakeholders, including professional bodies, partners and the wider educational community.
- ◆ To promote and maintain strong relationships with parents, pupils, staff, alumnae and the wider community.
- ◆ To promote and safeguard the welfare of all pupils and staff, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection remain central to school practice and culture.



PRINCIPAL DUTIES

- ◆ To report directly to the Board of Governors on all matters relating to the school, attending all meetings (except where private business is discussed), providing reports in advance as required, and contributing strategically to Governors' decision-making. This includes maintaining a close working relationship with the Chair and keeping them appropriately informed.
- ◆ To provide leadership and line management for the Executive Team, ensuring effective collaboration and clarity of responsibility across the school.
- ◆ To work closely with senior colleagues on all matters relating to safeguarding, staffing, finance, student recruitment, compliance, estates and operational delivery, appropriately delegating responsibilities while retaining strategic oversight.
- ◆ To ensure the effective management of the school's resources, including financial sustainability and commercial enterprise, buildings and grounds, in line with the school's strategic priorities.
- ◆ To maintain and strengthen partnerships with the Dulwich Estate and Dulwich Foundation schools and to work collaboratively on shared initiatives and events.
- ◆ To support and develop the school's partnerships with local schools and community organisations, reflecting James Allen's Girls' School's long-standing commitment to outreach and social impact.
- ◆ To contribute to relevant external boards and committees as appropriate, including representation connected to the Dulwich Estate.



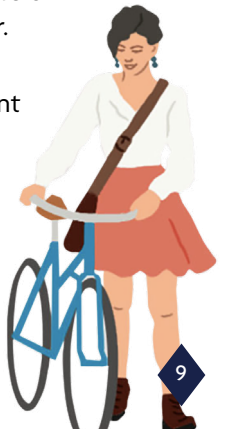
The Person

The Governors are seeking an inspirational Head who will lead this highly successful school with integrity, warmth and vision. The successful candidate will understand and value the distinctive ethos of JAGS, and will build on its strengths while preserving its culture and charitable mission. They will have the strategic capacity to guide the school confidently through an increasingly competitive landscape, and the presence to represent it credibly and convincingly beyond the immediate community. They will be excited by the opportunity to sustain the school's position as a leading voice within the girls' school sector, and keen to exploit the potential that position provides.



QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- ◆ A good degree; additional leadership and/or management qualifications would be an advantage.
- ◆ A proven track record of success and achievement in senior educational leadership, with clear evidence of strategic thinking.
- ◆ Experience in developing, implementing and monitoring strategic plans, and ensuring that priorities are translated into action.
- ◆ A proven track record of building strong relationships with multiple stakeholders, including Governors, parents, pupils, staff, alumnae and external partners.
- ◆ Experience of building and leading effective teams, developing colleagues and enabling others to perform at their best through clear delegation and support.
- ◆ Experience in managing human, financial and physical resources, with an understanding of financial sustainability and the commercial realities of the sector.
- ◆ Experience in managing a strong culture of safeguarding within an educational setting.
- ◆ Experience in broadening the commercial ventures of a school within a competitive landscape.
- ◆ Experience of the Independent Schools Inspectorate and associated regulatory compliance of the independent educational sector.
- ◆ Experience and understanding of a comparable educational environment in the independent, maintained or international sector.



KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- ◆ Intellectual credibility and the ability to win the confidence and respect of staff and pupils as an educational leader.
- ◆ Excellent communication skills (written and verbal), with the ability to articulate the school's values and direction clearly to different audiences.
- ◆ Ability to lead, inspire and motivate, combining decisiveness with good judgement and a humane approach.
- ◆ Ability to prioritise effectively in a busy and demanding environment, and to take decisions confidently when required.
- ◆ Financially astute and commercially aware, with the ability to position the school thoughtfully and confidently in an increasingly competitive market.
- ◆ Strong commitment to safeguarding and pupil welfare, and excellent knowledge of regulatory and legal responsibilities, including safer recruitment, health and safety and risk management.

PERSONAL

- ◆ A deep commitment to the ethos, values and charitable mission of the school.
- ◆ Integrity, discretion and good judgement.
- ◆ An assured presence, combined with approachability and empathy.
- ◆ Resilience, adaptability and calm under pressure.
- ◆ Emotional intelligence and self-awareness.
- ◆ The ability to inspire trust and confidence across the school community.
- ◆ Strategic and forward-looking, with the confidence to be outward-facing while remaining grounded in the life of the school.



How to Apply

James Allen's Girls' School has engaged the services of Odgers to assist with the recruitment of the Head.

Shortlist interviews with the Selection Committee will take place on **Wednesday 10 June**. Candidates invited to the final stage will be invited to have a full briefing visit to the school during **week commencing 15 June** and final interviews will take place on **Monday 22 June**.

In order to apply, please submit a 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/95843.

All applications will receive an automated response.

For an initial discussion, please contact:

Freddie Dennis: freddie.dennis@odgers.com

Lottie Willis: lottie.willis@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.

James Allen's Girls' School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and applicants must be willing to undergo screening appropriate to the post, including checks with current and past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.



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