



Downe House

Appointment Brief

Appointment of HR Director

November 2023

Reference: FKBVA

An introduction from Emma

There is no doubt that the success of our school, as with any organisation, lies in its people. We are extremely lucky at Downe House to have an outstanding team of staff all of whom, regardless of their roles, contribute to the delivery of the excellent education that we offer to the girls.

Although all the evidence shows that that we are operating in a challenging labour market, it remains one of our key strategic aims to build the highest quality of staff team by ensuring that we recruit, retain and provide development opportunities within all departments in the school. The Director of HR, working in close collaboration with colleagues in the Leadership Team, will be instrumental in shaping our HR strategy but will also have a keen eye on and interest in day-to-day HR matters too.

The HR Department is a strong and highly respected department within the school and the Director of HR will enjoy the support of a highly professional and committed HR team. There is a very strong foundation on which to build and we look forward to welcoming a person who shares our vision and values, and recognises that there is nothing more important than investing in our people.

Emma McKendrick

Headmistress



About Downe House

Downe House is one of the UK's leading boarding and day schools for girls aged 11 to 18. Established in 1907, Downe House is passionate about creating a strong learning environment and community for their girls, where every individual matters.

Downe House was founded by Miss Olive Willis in 1907, who held a strong belief that a school should meet the needs of young women by prizing the individual and creating a strong community. Now with just over 580 girls, Downe House still lives out the message that 'each individual matters', an ethos still as strong as it was over one hundred years ago, alongside its core values of kindness and respect for others. Downe House's aim has always been to enable, encourage and prepare girls to play a full and positive part as citizens of a global community and to become outstanding women of the future.

The Downe House DNA is the key to what makes a Downe House girl. These characteristics are instilled into every girl – Collaboration, Resilience, Creativity, Aspiration, Compassion, Communication and being Outward Looking. Beyond these core values, there is no 'typical Downe House girl' as every student is seen for their individual value and talent throughout their school life.

The 110-acre School campus is set on a beautiful and peaceful woodland estate in Berkshire providing a green and safe environment for the school. The outdoor facilities include woodland space, five lacrosse pitches, a floodlit astro pitch, seven netball courts and ten hard tennis courts. Buildings on the site include an impressive performing arts centre with a 500-seat theatre complete with lighting and sound desk, a dedicated science block with multiple laboratories for biology, chemistry and physics. In the foreign language department, seven different languages are taught, and the Murray Centre offers a state-of-the-art centre for learning, housing a large Library, 250-seat auditorium and various collaborative learning spaces. The School has its own chapel which sits in the heart of the site and its Christian values are central to the School's ethos.

Day pupils at Downe House are fully integrated members of their boarding house and are given the flexibility of starting early to join for breakfast and staying late to join in on activities once lessons finish for the day. In the Lower School, each House provides its own learning spaces, music practice rooms and common room. Pupils in the Lower Fourth (Year 8) also have the unique experience of spending a term at the School's château in Sauveterre to gain independence and develop new skills whilst living in a safe environment abroad. At 13+ the girls move to Upper School and are assigned an Academic tutor, encouraging them to take ownership of their learning. At Sixth Form girls move into a different experience on the campus, designed to prepare the girls for life beyond Downe House.

Downe House directly employs about 450 staff in a wide variety of positions including teachers, boarding and pastoral staff, and estates and catering staff. There are also a number of business support departments including Finance, IT and Communications and Marketing.

Downe House welcomes and is committed to creating global communities and has sister schools in Oman, Saudi Arabia, France, and an online Global Academy.

Academic Results

Downe House prides itself on providing an ambitious and rigorous education. Whilst academic success is undoubtedly important, as set out below equal weight is placed on developing the girls through co-curricular activities, encouraging interests, imagination, and enjoyment.

In 2023, 84% of A-Level results were A* to B, with A* to A results remaining high at 64%. Over 90% of the students took up places at their preferred choice of universities and institutions in the UK and abroad. 72% of the girls went to Russell Group Universities, 30% of them went to read STEM subjects and 7% went to Oxford and Cambridge.

At GCSE level 81% of grades were 9-7 (A*-A) with just under three quarters achieving 7 or more A*-A/9-7 grades. Individual subjects saw fantastic success in their A*-A/9-7 grades, such as Science (87%), Languages (86%) and Performing Arts (94%).

Co-Curriculum

Continuing from the vision of its founder Olive Willis, Downe House has a vision of education being an adventure and for girls to pursue activities and experiences that complement classroom learning. Sport plays a major part in life at Downe House, with extensive facilities and a broad range of competitive sports including lacrosse, tennis, squash, football, and athletics. Recreational sport is also offered including horse riding, wall climbing and yoga.

The School also offers a wealth of musical ensembles, from Symphony Orchestra to vocal ensembles and a strong choral tradition with six main choirs, two of which have recently won national awards. There are various large drama productions and opportunities to not only put on performances but also take theatre trips to watch and learn from professional performers.

A range of trips are offered including Geography trips to Iceland, Politics trips to Washington and a tennis tour to Portugal.



The role

PURPOSE OF POST

Downe House now look to appoint a senior HR professional to develop, lead and implement the School's HR strategy ensuring it aligns with the values and strategic vision of the School. With the addition of a new HR manager to the already well-respected and wonderfully supportive team, the HR Director can really focus on developing and actioning the strategic HR plan for the School.

Reporting to the Headmistress, this role will be responsible for the HR Manager, HR Officer and HR Administrator.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Develop, lead and implement the School's HR strategy in line with School values and aims
- Contribute to the development of the wider strategic vision and development of Downe House
- Provide professional advice to senior managers on organisation design and workforce development including application of employment law, HR policy and best practice
- Develop, support and manage a robust recruitment system to ensure the School attracts the right people and maintain Downe House's reputation as a desirable place to work
- Oversee and drive a strong equity, diversity and inclusion strategy throughout the School
- Oversee and lead the implementation the new HR system, Access People
- Ensure Downe House complies with all HR-related legal and regulatory requirements
- Ensure Downe House complies with all safeguarding regulatory requirements related to recruitment and employment
- Keep up to date with legal and regulatory changes and brief members of SLT and the wider staff body, as required
- Ensure all staff have access to wellbeing support
- Manage the School's HR Department so that it delivers an outstanding service, including:
 - Providing advice and guidance to SLT and line managers regarding HR matters
 - Providing guidance on employment matters to all staff
 - Ensuring that appropriate HR records are maintained to ensure compliance in all areas including data protection
 - Ensuring accurate and timely provision of contracts, employment documentation and payroll data and the proper use of the HR and Payroll systems
 - Providing leadership and motivation to all staff in the HR department, ensuring that the necessary skill and competency levels are in place or developing, and driving a culture within the department that is supportive, nurturing and delivers excellence in everything it does
 - Managing the HR Department in a cost-effective manner, being accountable for the HR department's budget and ensuring sound day-to-day budgetary management
- Be an active member of the SLT and be involved in wider school life, developing strong relationships with staff, students and parents



Person specification

The successful candidate will be a motivated and experienced HR generalist, who will bring the expertise required to be a valued member of the SLT, lead the HR strategy for Downe House and build strong relationships with the staff body.

CANDIDATES WILL:

- Have demonstrable experience in developing and leading HR business partnering in support of their organisation's objectives, including ability to challenge, engage and influence decision making
- Be skilled in developing improved HR systems and process, with experience of high quality, best practice systems and processes
- Be digitally savvy and have demonstrable experience in the development, implementation, and use of new technology systems in an HR function
- Provide strong management experience and strategic delivery
- Have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of HR good practice
- Bring experience in enabling organisational development and change management
- Experience of developing and implementing diversity and inclusion policies
- Have a thorough understanding of the key provisions of employment law and HR-related compliance
- Be able to develop organisational HR capacity
- Have excellent recruitment skills, including thorough (and appropriate) use of social media and networks
- Be CIPD qualified or equivalent

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES:

- A strong sense of empathy and resilience
- Adaptable and innovative and able to deliver and lead change
- Ability to relate well to a wide range of people
- Reflective and open to conflicting views, emotions and feedback
- Solution-focused and flexible in approach
- Motivation to be involved in all aspects of school life

DESIRABLE:

- Prior experience in a school setting is not required but successful candidates will have a good understanding of and empathy for the culture and complexities of working in an educational institution.

Terms of appointment

Downe House will require this position to be carried out as a full time position.

Salary: £80,000 - £90,000.

Given the school context of this role, the postholder will be required to be at Downe House during the week, with up to one day a week at home during holidays. There may be very occasional work on weekends or evenings.

A 9% employer pension contribution will be made.

Holiday entitlement: 25 days per annum plus bank holidays plus extra 3 days at Christmas

Other benefits include private health care, free meals and refreshments during working hours and an employee assistance programme.

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Downe House on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **FKBVA**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **24th November**

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

Interview Dates

First stage interviews will require one of the following afternoons, either the 4th December or 7th December.

Final panel interviews will be held on **Thursday 14th December**, in the afternoon.

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