



ST MARY'S CALNE
ST MARGARET'S CALNE

Chief Operating Officer (Bursar)

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in this position. I hope this information pack provides a helpful insight into our very special schools in the heart of Wiltshire and inspires you to apply to join our community.

The Chief Operating Officer will be a key member of the Schools' Leadership Team, reporting directly to the Head, with a dotted line to the Chair of Governors and the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

St Mary's (senior boarding and day school for girls) and St Margaret's (co-ed prep and nursery aged 2-11) share a beautiful 27-acre campus, where exceptional facilities support a broad and diverse educational offering. Both schools are outstanding in the care they provide to every pupil, as well as the wide range of opportunities available. We are extremely proud of our pupils and their achievements.

Our commercial Sports Club includes a 25m swimming pool, a sports hall, a climbing wall, a dance studio, and a state-of-the-art gym, which is used widely by the local community as well as the pupils and staff.

At the heart of our schools is our strong sense of community. Our core values of curiosity, compassion, and courage are demonstrated every day by pupils and staff alike. You would be joining a warm and welcoming team committed to providing the best possible educational experience to all our pupils.

We are seeking a Chief Operating Officer who is ambitious, collaborative and passionate about supporting the education of young people. Being an active part of our community is both important and immensely rewarding, and we hope that the successful candidate will be fully involved in school life, including attending some evening and weekend events.

RSAcademics are well placed to answer any further questions you may have, but I hope we will meet you through the recruitment process.

With best wishes,

Anne Wakefield

HEAD



OUR SCHOOLS



ST MARY'S CALNE
GIRLS' BOARDING & DAY

St Mary's Calne is a leading UK independent boarding and day school for girls aged 11 to 18, shaped by the values of a full boarding ethos. The School opened in 1873 and currently has 335 pupils, of whom around 80% board. Located in the historic market town of Calne in Wiltshire, the School sits on a picturesque campus near the edge of the North Wessex Downs, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, offering a peaceful and inspiring rural setting. Calne itself lies approximately 20 minutes from the city of Bath and within easy reach of Bristol and Oxford, with good transport links to London. This blend of countryside charm and accessibility makes St Mary's Calne an ideal location for both study and community life, and its national reputation means that it attracts pupils from London and across the south of England, as well as overseas. At present, there are boarders from 30 countries.

St Mary's cultivates a vibrant and supportive community where every pupil is known, valued, and inspired to flourish. The aim is to develop in each pupil confidence, independence, and the sense of purpose they need to succeed, supported always by

a kind and caring community. The School supports the evolving aspirations of every pupil and equips each of them with the knowledge, skills, and self-belief to shape their own future and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

St Mary's is deeply committed to academic excellence, achieving outstanding results through exceptional teaching and a culture of curiosity, ambition, and intellectual growth. A level results are consistently either above or close to 90% A*-B grades, and nearly all leavers gain entry to their first-choice university, including those applying for the most highly selective courses. Destinations span a wide range of top-tier institutions, including Oxford, Cambridge, and leading Russell Group and US universities.

Exceptional facilities provide a vibrant foundation where each pupil is inspired to learn inside and outside the classroom. In September 2020, a new state-of-the-art **Library** was opened, providing a technology-rich and interactive learning environment. All academic departments are very well equipped, and the music school and art studios are both purpose-built. In addition to the Sports Centre, the excellent sports facilities include 20 tennis courts, netball courts and a full-sized astro pitch.

There are six boarding houses, and from the age of 14, girls have single rooms. 120 of the rooms are ensuite, which provides scope for commercial lettings outside term time.

Future plans include a STEM and Creative Tech Centre and a Performing Arts Centre, pending funding through the Calne Foundation Trust.





ST MARGARET'S CALNE

CO-EDUCATIONAL NURSERY & PREP

St Margaret's Prep and Bluebird Nursery, located on the same site with St Mary's Calne, provide a rich and dynamic educational experience for boys and girls aged 2 to 11. There are currently 170 pupils in the School.

Exceptional pastoral care lies at the heart of everything at St Margaret's. Dedicated to fostering an inclusive and dynamic community, every child is empowered to flourish and grow. Staff take time to know each pupil as an individual, nurturing their confidence, curiosity, and character with warmth and dedication.

Beginning at the age of two in the year-round Bluebird Nursery, children start their learning journey through play, exploration, and rich early experiences that build confidence, curiosity, and independence. From the age of three, they enjoy specialist teaching in sport, swimming, computing, French, and music, nurturing their talents and broadening their horizons.

In the Prep School, outstanding teachers inspire academic excellence, which is celebrated alongside a vibrant and extensive programme of extracurricular activities designed to develop every child's unique interests and skills. The School has its own dedicated specialist classrooms, outside play areas and a purpose-built hall, which is used for assemblies, drama productions and music events. Pupils also use the Sports Centre, dining hall, theatre and sports pitches at St Mary's, and the older children also use the science laboratories.

Prep pupils can board from Year 5 within the Lower School boarding house at St Mary's.

Calne Culture

The Schools' expectations guide every pupil to grow with integrity and confidence:

- **Be bold** – Step forward with confidence. Embrace challenges, pursue goals with purpose and have the courage to do what's right, even when it is not the easy path.
- **Be kind** – Lead with empathy, respect and compassion. Help create a community where everyone feels seen, supported and valued for who they are.
- **Be you** – Celebrate what makes you unique. Stay true to yourself while contributing to the shared values that bring our community to life.

School Values

- **Curiosity** – We inspire a true love of learning, encouraging every pupil to ask questions, explore boldly and find joy in discovering new perspectives.
- **Compassion** – We lead with kindness and empathy, creating a community where everyone feels seen, supported and respected for who they are.
- **Courage** – We empower pupils to face challenges with confidence, embrace new experiences and stand firmly by their values with integrity.



LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

St Mary's School (Calne) is an Incorporated Charitable Company limited by guarantee, charity number 309482 and company number 00235572. It has one wholly owned subsidiary, St Mary's School (Calne) Services Limited, company number 04111368, through which the Sports Club is operated. There is one Governing Body for both St Mary's and St Margaret's Prep. The Governors, as the directors of the company and charity trustees, are legally responsible for the overall control and strategic direction of both schools.

The Governing Body meets once each term. The detailed work of reviewing proposals

and compliance is carried out by four sub-committees which report and make recommendations to the Governing Body. The sub-committees are Education, Finance and General Purposes, Marketing and Safeguarding and Pastoral. The Governors delegate the leadership and management of the Schools to the Head of St Mary's Calne who is supported by the Leadership Team which includes the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the Head of St Margaret's Prep. The COO, who is also Clerk to the Governors, is accountable to the Governors but reports to the Head of St Mary's on a day-to-day basis.

The Schools are regularly inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, and its various inspection reports (last undertaken in February 2025) can be viewed **[here](#)**.



FINANCE

St Mary's finances are robust and extremely well managed. The balance sheet is strong, and the School has no debt.

Fundraising activity is managed through the Calne Foundation Trust (CFT), which is a separate charity and company but whose accounts are consolidated within the St Mary's School (Calne) financial statements. The School's Development Team

supports the CFT's fundraising activities, and the finance function is also provided by the School.

Whilst the CFT has been successful in raising funds through charitable donations to support capital projects such as the new Library, the Governors and Head are keen to diversify income generation further. The opportunity for improving the profitability of the Sports Club and increasing the commercial use of the facilities will be a particular focus for the COO.

Full financial information is in St Mary's annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2024, which can be found **here**.



THE ROLE

The Head and Governors are seeking to appoint a commercially astute, strategic, and dynamic Chief Operating Officer (COO) to join the Leadership Team at St Mary's Calne and St Margaret's Prep.

This is a pivotal role for an experienced and engaging professional who will lead the Schools' business and support operations while playing a central part in shaping and delivering their long-term strategic vision.

The COO will have overall responsibility for key operational areas, including finance, estates and facilities, HR, the Sports Club, health and safety, catering, housekeeping, transport, and commercial activities. Providing strategic oversight and leadership to these functions, the COO will be instrumental in ensuring operational excellence, financial strength, and long-term sustainability across both schools.

In addition, the COO will serve as Clerk to the Governors, supporting the effective governance of the Schools through high-quality administration, regulatory compliance, and efficient communication between the Governing Body and school leadership.

The successful candidate will bring a proven track record of senior financial and operational leadership, with strong commercial acumen, strategic planning

expertise, and the ability to lead and motivate multi-disciplinary teams. While experience in the education sector is not essential, candidates must demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the ethos and values of a high-performing independent school environment.

This is a collaborative, community-facing role requiring excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to foster trusted relationships across a warm and engaged school community.

Reporting Structure

The COO has overall responsibility for a large and diverse team of circa 130 operational staff, with direct line management responsibility for:

- Assistant Bursar (leads the finance function and a qualified accountant)
- Bursary and HR Administrator
- Catering and Functions Manager
- Director of Estates
- Director of Human Resources
- Domestic Services Manager
- Logistics Manager
- School Office Manager
- School Shop Manager



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities outlined are not exhaustive but are indicative of the responsibilities of this significant and wide-ranging role.

Strategy

- As a key member of the Leadership Team, contribute to the development and effective delivery of the Strategic and Development Plans and the smooth running of all areas of the Schools.
- Develop and implement a long-term strategy for the commercial aspects of the Schools and identify and implement opportunities for new revenue streams.
- Support and promote the Schools' ethos, culture, and values.

Leadership and Management

- Lead and inspire staff, bring out the best in them and facilitate strong working relationships between the teaching and operational staff.
- Promote modern business practices and drive initiatives to ensure that the operational functions are consistent with a leading independent school.

- Manage and nurture effective relationships with key external service providers and professionals, including the bank, insurers, legal advisers, local government and key contractors.
- Provide line management for direct reports, including all aspects of performance management.
- Support the training and professional development of direct reports and the wider operational staff.

Clerk to the Governors & Clerk to the Trustees

- Act as Company Secretary to St Mary's and its associated entities, ensuring they comply with all company and charity law.
- Advise the Chair of Governors on matters pertaining to governance. Ensure all Governors are aware of their duties and responsibilities.
- Ensure the production of timely agendas, papers and minutes for all Governors' and Trustees' meetings.
- Arrange appropriate induction, skills training, and away-days for Governors.

Finance

In close liaison with the Assistant Bursar:

- Manage the financial performance of the Schools, maintaining a sustainable, forward-looking strategic financial plan.

- Advise the Governors, Head and Leadership Team on all matters relating to financial strategy, including allocation of resources and the impact of their decisions on the Schools' financial position and commercial matters.
- Ensure that a robust system of financial planning and control operates across the Schools consistent with strategy, policies and procedures, including fraud prevention.
- Advise the Head and Governing Body on borrowing requirements and cashflow projections, manage any debt and ensure compliance with any covenants.
- Oversee the work of the Assistant Bursar and her team, including budgets, forecasts, management and statutory accounts, the annual audit, billing, revenue collection, purchase ledger records and supplier payments, the processing of the payroll and pensions, the Asset Register, VAT and other tax arrangements.
- Provide clear financial reporting to the Head, Governing Body and Leadership Team.
- Ensure fair and robust debtor management, including meeting with parents when necessary.
- Analyse school fees and costs, including benchmarking, and work with the Governors and Head to set fee levels and salaries.
- Oversee the Schools' bursary and hardship application process.
- Ensure that the Schools secure best value from contracts and procurement arrangements.



Estates and Facilities

- Develop and maintain an effective, forward-looking masterplan which supports the strategic vision.
- Lead the delivery of capital projects to time, specification and budget.
- Ensure delivery of a planned maintenance programme for all school buildings, grounds and facilities.
- Oversee and support the work of the Director of Estates and the Domestic Services Manager and their teams to ensure that the facilities are always well presented, serviceable, safe, and compliant with regulations, including health and safety, fire, and the Independent Schools Standards, liaising with external consultants as appropriate.
- Ensure appropriate arrangements for the security of the site, including fire safety.
- Seek to integrate sustainable solutions and initiatives to reduce the Schools' environmental footprint and energy consumption.
- Ensure that the Schools' catering provides high-quality, age-appropriate meals and meets all of the nutritional needs whilst providing value for money.

HR

- Oversee the provision of an effective, proactive HR function that follows best practice, including recruitment, induction and training, contract documentation, payroll, remuneration and reward strategies, pension arrangements and benefits, performance, retention, record management, including the Single Central Register, and staff wellbeing.
- Ensure the Head, Leadership Team and department heads have access to advice and data to manage employment matters.

Risk Management, Compliance and Health and Safety

- Ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, ensuring policies, procedures and training are in place and championing their application throughout the Schools, including commercial activities.
- Promote a positive health and safety culture throughout the Schools and fulfil all the COO's responsibilities in accordance with the Schools' Health and Safety Policy.
- Chair the Health and Safety Committee.
- Act as the Schools' Data Protection Officer, with overall responsibility for adherence of the Schools to data protection legislation.
- Ensure the implementation of arrangements for the identification, assessment, and management of risk, including oversight of the risk assessment process and risk register.

- Ensure that the Schools have appropriate insurance cover for all key insurable risks.
- Take a key role in critical incident and business continuity planning to ensure that the Schools are well prepared for any emergency.
- Act as the main conduit with the Schools' legal client representative.

Commercial Activities

- Oversee the development and implementation of strategies to diversify income beyond termly school fees.
- Maximise income from commercial activities, including from the Sports Club and residential lettings, building on existing arrangements and exploiting new opportunities where possible, consistent with the Schools' values and ensuring all educational and safeguarding aspects are maintained.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

All members of staff are expected to have proper regard for the Schools' safeguarding policy and procedures, which includes undertaking necessary training, and can be found **here**. St Mary's is dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils, regardless of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

Applicants should be able to demonstrate intellectual strength and have an excellent track record of senior leadership experience, including strong strategic and operational finance skills. Whilst a formal finance qualification is not essential, the successful candidate will be highly numerate with an ability to explain financial information with confidence.

A strategist, they will also possess strong people management skills and an ability to lead the day-to-day operations of the Schools, Sports Club and other commercial activities.

The COO's primary reporting line is to the Head, but as Clerk to the Governors, the COO reports to the Chair of Governors. The relationship between the Chair, the Head and the COO is key to the success of the Schools, as is that with the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The successful candidate will bring the following qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge, leadership style and values.

Qualifications and Experience

- Educated to degree level or equivalent.
- A professional qualification in a finance, business or accounting discipline (desirable but not essential).

- A strong track record of successful senior leadership experience in a complex organisation and working with a Board of Trustees or equivalent structure.
- Direct experience of both strategy and operations.
- Experience of working within a complex budgetary structure and embracing, managing and promoting change.
- Proven experience of leading and developing high-performing, multi-disciplinary teams.
- Working within a regulatory framework.

Skills and Knowledge

- Strong strategic abilities and organisational skills with the ability to translate strategic goals into practical actions.
- Strong financial and commercial acumen with the ability to easily assimilate, analyse, interpret and present data and assess risk.
- Demonstrable knowledge of property, HR, IT, health and safety, data protection, legal and other issues.
- First-class communication and negotiation skills – able to balance robustness with constructive, positive discussion and diplomacy.
- Strong interpersonal skills and high levels of emotional intelligence.

- An understanding of the commercial, economic and financial imperatives in the leadership and management of schools.
- A strong commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

Leadership and Personal Attributes

- A highly visible, empathetic and charismatic leader who can work both independently and as a key team member to inspire confidence in all stakeholders and encourage and motivate staff.
- A commitment to and interest in being involved in the wider life of the Schools, including some weekends.
- Demonstrable energy, stamina and drive with attention to detail and ability to manage competing priorities.
- High levels of self-awareness, humility and flexibility, as well as an open and collaborative leadership style.
- Personal integrity, professionalism and sound judgement.
- Dedicated, optimistic and resilient with a sense of humour.
- Values and promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.



APPOINTMENT TERMS

A highly attractive remuneration package is offered, reflecting the seniority and significance of the position. The salary offered will depend on skills and experience.

This is a full-time, 52-week post, and some flexibility of working hours will be required in light of the role and responsibilities it entails. The role also forms part of the Leadership Team on-call rota.

The main benefits are likely to include:

- Annual holiday entitlement of 30 days plus statutory bank holidays.
- Rent-free family accommodation is available.
- Contributory pension scheme with life assurance at four times annual salary.

- A generous fee remission for children who meet the entrance criteria.
- Medical insurance for the postholder.
- Complimentary meals during term time.
- Discounted membership of the Sports Club, including swimming pool, fitness classes and gym.
- An employee assistance programme.

St Mary's Calne is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This role will bring you into contact with children; you are expected to share this commitment. This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. 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) and a review of their social media presence.

All appointments are subject to satisfactory reference, DBS and other statutory checks, proof of identity and eligibility to work in the UK, completion of a medical questionnaire and proof of qualifications.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics in the first instance to arrange a confidential discussion with:

- Nina Lambert,
Head of Professional Services Appointments:
ninalambert@rsacademics.com

Closing date: 10.00am on Monday 17 November 2025.

Applications should be made electronically to RSAcademics. To submit your application, please upload your documents according to the instructions on the **RS Academics website**.

You should submit:

- A completed application form (available to download from www.rsacademics.com).
- A covering letter addressed to the Head, Mrs Anne Wakefield. The letter should be a maximum of two pages and should explain your reasons for applying and outline your suitability for the role.

If you have any questions about uploading your application documents, please contact:

- Laura Cave, Project Coordinator, at
applications@rsacademics.com /
+44 (0) 204 6269 793.

The process is as follows:

- All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement that your application has been received within two working days of sending it, please contact our Head Office by telephone.
- **Preliminary interviews** will take place with RSAcademics via Microsoft Teams in the week commencing 24 November 2025.
- **Longlist interviews** will take place at the School on Monday 1 December 2025.
- **Shortlist interviews** will take place at the School on Monday 8 December 2025.

Founded in 2002 by Russell Speirs, RSAcademics has advised and supported over 700 schools and educational organisations in the UK and worldwide. Through our working partnerships with heads, leadership teams, boards, staff and parents, we specialise in supporting schools in five main areas: strategy, marketing and research; equality, diversity and inclusion; operational improvement; leadership and governance and philanthropy. We enable schools worldwide to thrive by finding and developing senior leaders, guiding decision makers, making connections and shaping debate. We are known for the calibre and spirit of our people. We exist entirely to serve schools because we believe that the world needs thriving schools. Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.

RSAcademics is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in schools and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

