



CANFORD

Director of Marketing, Admissions and Engagement

CANDIDATE INFORMATION



Welcome



It is an exciting time to be at Canford. Our community is alive with ambition – in the classroom, on the sports field, on the river and on the stage – and that energy is reflected in our ever-stronger academic results and our pupils' remarkable appetite to contribute, lead and grow. Last month, we announced the creation of the Canford Schools Group, a bold next step in our evolution. Our merger with Dumpton School will be the first of several partnerships with like-minded schools in the independent sector. Each will share in our ethos of collaboration and trust while retaining the distinct character and autonomy that make their communities thrive.

This culture of empowerment runs deep at Canford. We ask our pupils to think independently, act courageously and support one another with compassion – and we seek the same in our leadership. The Group is built on that same principle: a network of schools bound by shared purpose, not uniformity.

The Director of Engagement (as it will be known internally) will play a pivotal role in shaping how Canford presents itself to the world, leading a talented team across marketing, admissions, communications and development. Working closely with me and as part of both the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) of the Group, the Director will ensure that our story is told with authenticity and ambition, that our community remains deeply engaged, and that the relationships we nurture today continue to sustain and inspire future generations.

Canford is a place where aspiration, innovation and collaboration are at the heart of everything we do. Relationships matter deeply here – they are the foundation of our success. We are therefore seeking a leader who combines strategic vision with emotional intelligence, who can unite teams behind a shared purpose and communicate the distinctive spirit of Canford with warmth, creativity and clarity.

The Director of Engagement will be central to strengthening our connection with current and prospective families, alumni, and the wider community while ensuring our philanthropic and partnership work reflects the values we live every day. This is a rare and exciting opportunity to shape the future narrative of one of the UK's leading boarding schools. Together, we can shape the next chapter of Canford's story and continue to inspire generations to come.

If this is a role that excites you and you believe you have the requisite skills and experience, we would be delighted to hear from you.

CHRIS WHEELER

Headmaster



Background



Founded in 1923, Canford School is set in 250 acres of beautiful parkland on the outskirts of Wimborne in Dorset. The School, which has some 660 pupils aged 13–18, the majority of whom board, is amongst the country's top co-educational boarding and day schools. The 19th-century Canford Manor House sits at the heart of the campus, and the facilities are exceptional. Canford has established a commanding reputation built on its excellent academic achievement, breadth of education and a fresh, lively approach. The School offers a superb sports and co-curricular programme for pupils, which is seen as amongst the best in the independent sector.

Having celebrated its centenary in 2023, Canford was a finalist for 'Public School of the Year' in the Tatler 2026 Awards, the Independent School Parent's 'Top School in the South of England 2025', and the number-one ranked co-ed boarding and day school in the South West for top A level and GCSE results in the Sunday Times Parent Power report 2025. It is an exciting time to be joining the School, with September 2025 seeing the arrival of a new Head, the opening of a new Sixth Form College and the announcement of the merger with Dumpton School to form the Canford Schools Group of charitable independent schools.

Canford is in the final stages of completing 'The College', an impressive new £20m facility which will offer our Sixth Form pupils outstanding provision. With U6th day pupils based in the Hub along with university-style services for Futures, Welfare and Academic Support and boarders in the residential

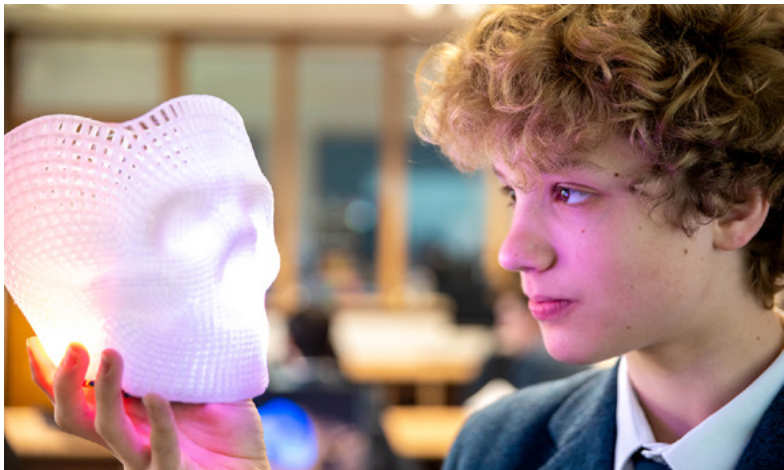
wings, the building is designed to ensure all pupils develop the independence they need to be ready for life beyond Canford, whether at University or one of the growing number of other post-school routes.

Having been at capacity in our boarding houses for many years, the creation of this new facility will create spaces across all boarding houses to grow and develop our boarding provision, which will be an important part of the vision for the coming years.

Alongside its place as a school, Canford also offers excellent commercial facilities which are available to members of the public, including event and wedding facilities, a sports centre, a nine-hole golf course, real tennis courts and a semi-professional theatre.

Dumpton is a popular co-educational day prep school for pupils aged 2–13 years, three miles from Canford. A finalist in the 2025 Independent School of the Year 'Coeducational School of the Year' Award, it has experienced continued growth in pupil numbers and record numbers of scholarships to senior schools in recent years.

As Canford School and Dumpton merge to form the Canford Schools Group, the Director of Engagement will play a key strategic role within this exciting new chapter. The postholder will serve on the Executive Leadership Team of the Group and will contribute to the shared vision, collaboration, and strategic development of this new family of schools united by common values, culture, and ambition.



Vision and Values



COURAGEOUS ATTITUDE

Being principled and strong, yet reflective and tolerant, takes courage.

We support members of our community to be bold in expressing thoughts, words and deeds yet respectful of the diversity in our world and society.

HUMBLE AMBITION

Pursuing goals without arrogance or complacency brings meaningful success.

We challenge members of our community to be energetic and resilient in pursuit of their goals but honest and grateful for fulfilment of them.

GRACIOUS LEADERSHIP

Fulfilling a duty to guide, support and include others makes a difference.

We urge members of our community to lead graciously and serve willingly for the greater good.

PURPOSEFUL ENGAGEMENT

Building a confident mindset develops positive life-long learning.

We inspire members of our community to be curious and determined in pursuit of knowledge and opportunity.



EXPLORE | EXPRESS | EXCEL | COMMUNITY

The Academic Leader

No. 1 school in the region* for top **A Level** and **GCSE** results.

HOW WE ACHIEVE THIS – THE FACTS:



1-1 support
to achieve the very best outcome for every pupil



Learning is not just accepted; it's **part of our culture**



Teaching **tailored** by year group, with College approach to Sixth Form



We do not simply select top-set pupils. We look for all-round potential



120 specialist subject teachers across 20 departments



Small class sizes
15 for GCSE, 10 for A Level**



Breadth of intake
120 Year 9s join from over 50 different schools***



Academic excellence, but not a results-at-all-costs culture. We grow confident, independent minds and focus on every child's best personal outcome

% RESULTS COMPARISON

	Canford	National
A Level		
A*	23	9.3
A*/A	55.4	28.2
A*/B	84	55
GCSE		
9	28.8	5.1
9-7	71.7	21.8
9-4	98.4	67.1

“Over 95% of our pupils currently choose to go on to university, with 80%+ offers from Russell Group/Top 12. But the world is changing fast. Our College Futures programme guides every path – from degree apprenticeships and Art Foundations to Medical Schools and international study. Our focus is on the best outcome for every individual Canfordian.”

* Based on Sunday Times Parent Power report 2025., co-ed independent senior boarding and day schools ** Average class sizes ***Canford tracked across independent and state schools

The Boarding Culture

Canford's genuine 7-day-a-week boarding school community offers rich experiences and lasting friendships for all pupils. There is flexibility for boarders to spend some Saturday nights at home if they want to, keeping families closely connected, while day pupils can take full advantage of everything on offer in the evenings and at weekends.

HOW WE ACHIEVE THIS – THE FACTS:



7-day-a-week
culture inclusive for
both boarding and day



21st-century model
– boarders can opt for some
extra Saturday nights at home*



4 out of 5 boarders
are in school every
weekend – there is no
'emptying out' culture



The mix of **fun and**
skills-based evening and
weekend activities are open to
all pupils, boarding and day

“Boarding is the
real deal.”
Talk Education

“Boarding opportunities extend the fun!”
Current boy boarder

On average, Canford tracked. *Boarders can leave after Saturday school a number of extra times each term in addition to exeats and half terms, but must return by Sunday evening.

Tiered Opportunities in **Sport and Activity**

HOW WE ACHIEVE THIS – THE FACTS:



50+ different sports, clubs
and activities, inclusive and
open to all



National semis/finals*

Hockey, Cricket, Netball,
Tennis, Football

100+ teams play **1,000+**
fixtures across **16 sports** every
year, developing sporting skills,
teamwork, confidence, and
positive physical wellbeing.



OCs Beyond Canford

USA Golf #27 rank, U23 World
Rowing Gold, U19 England Cricket,
Bath and Leicester Premiership Rugby



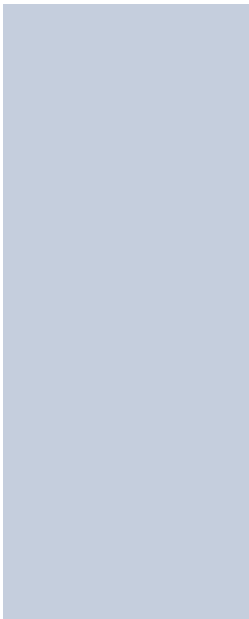
CCF – Best School**

260 CCF cadets,
26 Sixth Form NCOs

“ Sport here is everything you might expect in a school of this calibre
and scope – and then some. ”

The Good Schools Guide

*2023-25, **The Week: Independent Schools Guide



The Role

This is a newly created opportunity for an exceptional individual to lead the external relations activities for this highly successful school at a particularly exciting time in its history. Reporting directly to the Headmaster, this is a pivotal leadership role which, as a member of the Executive Leadership Team, will also be instrumental in shaping the strategic direction of both the School and the Canford Group as a whole.

This dynamic role will bring together the previously separate functions of Marketing, Admissions, and Development into a cohesive and collaborative External Relations team. The Director of Engagement will provide motivational leadership and deliver Canford's strategy for all outward-facing functions – including marketing, communications, admissions, feeder relations, development, alumni engagement, and international pupil recruitment. The postholder will provide strategic leadership and ensure Group-wide coherence, collaboration, and innovation across all activity. Excellence in engagement and communication is the foundation of all relationships, whether with pupils, staff, parents, alumni, Governors, prospective and former parents, or the sector more broadly; Canford has a compelling educational mission and a rich seam of stories to tell.

This Canford Group role has vital strategic and operational responsibilities, including oversight of all day-to-day admissions, marketing and development operations. It is a wide-ranging and hands-on role requiring an innovative and dynamic individual who combines highly effective people skills with strong business and market insight. As a prominent ambassador for the School, the Director of Engagement will articulate and promote Canford's distinctive ethos, values, and educational vision to a wide range of audiences – locally, nationally, and internationally. Through strategic oversight and effective relationship management, the postholder will enhance the School's reputation, support sustainable pupil recruitment, and foster enduring partnerships with key stakeholders and communities.

The post will most likely attract either an experienced education professional or an outstanding individual from a commercial background who brings both an instinctive understanding of the independent education landscape and the strategic, relational, and creative skills to thrive in this complex and exciting role.



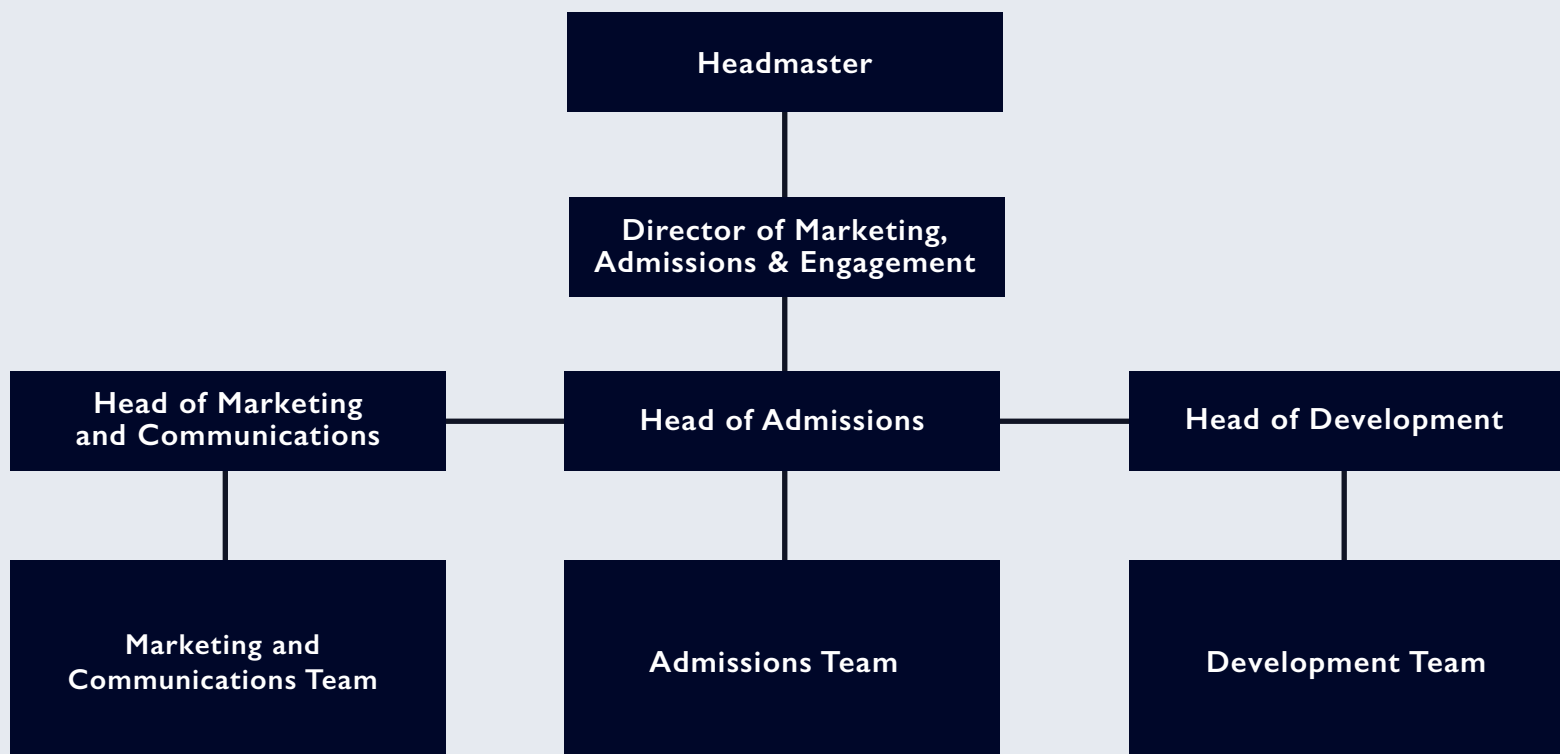
The Team



The areas of Admissions, Marketing & Communications, and Development have each achieved outcomes independently; the next step is to harness their collective strengths through a more integrated, collaborative model.

The Director of Engagement will play a pivotal role in shaping this next phase, building a cohesive team culture, refining structures, appointing into key roles and aligning strategy to position Canford for continued success and growth.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS TEAM



Key Responsibilities

In addition to the general responsibilities of a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the Canford Executive Leadership Team, the main responsibilities and tasks are as follows:

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Develop and implement a long-term, integrated external relations strategy aligned with Canford's strategic plan, vision, and values based on robust data, analysis and evidence and taking account of the current economic, financial and political context.
- Lead, inspire, and develop the External Relations team, ensuring clear direction, professional growth, and a culture of collaboration and excellence.
- Embed external relations across the Canford community, fostering strong partnerships with academic, pastoral, operational, and support teams.
- Provide strategic insight to the Head and Governors on market trends, brand positioning, and external opportunities or challenges affecting the independent sector.
- Establish, monitor, and report on measurable KPIs for admissions, marketing, communications, and development activity.
- Oversee the External Relations budget, ensuring value for money and the effective allocation of resources.
- Represent Canford at external events, presenting on relevant topics as appropriate.
- Have oversight of compliance with all relevant regulations, policies, systems and procedures, including UKVI.
- Line manage the respective Heads of Marketing and Communications, Admissions and Development.
- Provide guidance and support on all external relations-related matters to all schools within the Canford Group, ensuring that opportunities for shared learning and efficiencies are maximised across the Group.
- Promote a culture of high performance with a focus on successful outcomes.





MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- Work closely with the Head of Marketing and Communications to oversee all aspects of Canford's MarComs operations to deliver continuous improvement and excellence in customer service.
- Oversee Canford's brand strategy, ensuring consistent, high-quality, and engaging communications that authentically reflect Canford's ethos and community.
- Act as an ambassador for and custodian of the Canford brand and support all staff to ensure that the Canford brand is applied consistently and that house style guidelines are followed across all areas of Canford's activity, including internal and external communications, commercial activities, display materials and across the campus.
- Lead the creation of dynamic, integrated content across digital, social, and traditional channels – including website, prospectus, video, photography, and print materials in support of all Canford's externally facing activities, whether recruitment, philanthropic, commercial or community focused.
- Manage media relations and proactive press engagement, safeguarding Canford's reputation and promoting thought leadership.
- Plan and deliver targeted campaigns to support and drive enquiry generation, pupil recruitment, open days, scholarships, bursaries, and Sixth Form promotion.
- Commission and interpret market research and competitor analysis to inform positioning, strategy, and messaging.
- Lead and advise the Headmaster and Governors on crisis communications planning and management.
- Support and advise the Headmaster and Governors on areas of reputational risk, change management and associated internal and external communications.

ADMISSIONS & PUPIL RECRUITMENT

- Provide strategic oversight of all admissions activities, ensuring a professional, warm, and personalised journey from initial enquiry to enrolment.
- Ensure that pupil recruitment targets are understood and met, ensuring the School remains full and that pupil communities are appropriately balanced across all year groups and Houses.
- Work closely with the Head of Admissions to oversee all admissions operations and administration, ensuring continuous improvement and excellent, efficient customer service throughout.
- Strengthen relationships with key feeder schools, educational consultants, and agents to maintain a strong and sustainable recruitment pipeline.
- Develop international recruitment strategies, identifying target markets and building partnerships with overseas schools and agents.
- Monitor admissions data to track conversion rates and inform future strategy and drive operational change where necessary.
- Ensure the effective use of CRM and data systems to deliver efficient, insight-driven processes, always ensuring compliance with GDPR.

DEVELOPMENT & ALUMNI RELATIONS

- In close liaison with the Headmaster, shape and deliver a long-term development, alumni relations and philanthropy strategy.
- Work closely with the Head of Development to support the execution of Canford's development strategy and ensure the delivery of strategic priorities.
- Oversee alumni and past parent engagement, building a connected, supportive, and active community.

- Oversee strategic fundraising or alumni relations communications, including web pages and all publications, ensuring consistency with Canford's overall communications and marketing strategy and brand identity.
- Ensure excellence in donor stewardship, compliance with fundraising regulations, and effective data management in line with GDPR.
- Consider and agree KPIs for success with the Headmaster and monitor and report on this data to the Head and Governors as required.

EVENTS & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Oversee a high-quality programme of events that strengthen engagement and promote Canford's reputation – including open days, celebration evenings, feeder events, reunions, and fundraising dinners.
- Represent Canford at educational fairs, conferences, and external engagements in the UK and overseas.
- Promote Canford's role within the local and regional community, fostering partnerships that enhance outreach and reputation.

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

Canford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment and to become familiar with the policies and procedures for safeguarding children and child protection, which can be found [here](#).

No job description can fully cover all aspects of such an appointment, and therefore, the successful person must be flexible and willing to take on other reasonable responsibilities and tasks in order to fulfil the role.



The Person



The successful candidate will be a key player in the life and future of one of the UK's leading independent schools. Plans for the future of the Canford Group are ambitious, distinctive and exciting. The Director of Engagement will have a high profile within the School and across the Group and will carry significant responsibilities. They will thrive on the opportunity to define a clear strategy and implement and monitor its effectiveness skillfully. They will have confidence and presence but also demonstrate flexibility and subtlety in order to successfully engage staff and others in the delivery of the strategic aims. They will have many of the following key skills, experience and attributes:

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Demonstrable success in and substantial experience of working at a strategic level in a marketing, communications or business development-related leadership role with a diverse range of responsibilities.
- Experience of having developed and led high-performance teams.
- Proven success in developing and delivering integrated strategies that achieve measurable impact in reputation, recruitment, or engagement.
- Commercial acumen combined with strong analytical and strategic planning skills, with the ability to translate vision into practical action.
- Exceptional interpersonal, communication, and presentation skills, with the ability to influence and inspire confidence at all levels.
- Experience managing teams and budgets in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment.

- Demonstrated success of engaging, building and managing stakeholder relationships, with warmth, emotional intelligence, and diplomacy.
- A creative, proactive, and results-driven approach, with the ability to manage multiple priorities effectively.
- Prior professional experience in an educational environment, whilst helpful, is not essential.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

- Willingness to take an interest in and become involved in all aspects of school life.
- Committed team player, confident in leading change and embodies a collegiate and collaborative approach.
- Ability to translate an ambitious vision into meaningful plans and objectives and gain commitment from the staff community.
- The critical intelligence capable of systematically analysing performance, the market and competitors.
- Proactive approach, confident to challenge the status quo where needed and constantly strives for excellence.
- High professional and personal standards, combined with motivation, initiative and drive.
- A genuine empathy for and commitment to the values and ethos of boarding and day school education.
- Willingness to work flexibly, including evenings, weekends, and travel (UK and overseas).
- A clear commitment to delivering best practice in safeguarding.
- Values and promotes diversity, equality and inclusion.

Benefits

A highly attractive remuneration package is offered, reflecting the significance and seniority of the position. The salary offered will depend on skills and experience; however, it is anticipated that it will be in the region of £90,000 – £100,000 per annum. This is a full-time, 52-week post, and some flexibility in working hours will be required in light of the role and responsibilities it entails.

- Discounted sports centre membership
- Staff wellbeing & health workshops
- Free healthy lunch
- Free cash plan
- Flu jabs

HEALTH

- Contributory pension scheme
- Death in service benefit
- Cycle to work scheme
- Free car parking
- Free financial advice

MONEY

- Your voice
- Appraisal scheme
- Professional development opportunities
- Use of NASH building
- Excellent working environment

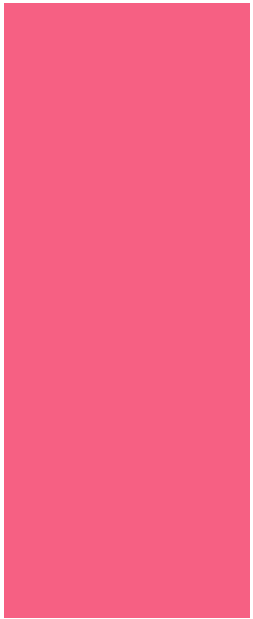
WORK

- Free access to Lifeworks portal, including online advice and support and access to free counselling
- Discounted golf club membership
- Facebook group for social events
- Staff discount on facilities hire
- Enhanced maternity/paternity and holiday allowance

LIFE

- Discounted sports centre membership for your family
- Family social events
- Reduced theatre tickets
- Free cash plan for children

FAMILY



Application Process



Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics in the first instance to arrange a confidential discussion with Cat Sutherland-Hawes, Search Consultant:

catrionasutherland-hawes@rsacademics.com

Closing date: 10.00am on Monday 1st December 2025

Applications should be made electronically to RSAcademics. To submit your application, please upload your documents according to the instructions on the RSAcademics [website](https://www.rsacademics.com).

You should submit the following (both in PDF format):

- A completed application form (available to download from www.rsacademics.com).
- A covering letter addressed to the Headmaster, Mr Chris Wheeler. The letter should explain your reasons for applying and suitability for the role.

If you have any questions about uploading your application documents, please contact Jonathan Barnes, Head of Operations (Leadership Appointments), at: applications@rsacademics.com. Jonathan can also be reached by calling our Head Office on +44 (0) 204 6269 791.

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 Teams between Friday 5th and Wednesday 10th December 2025.
- Longlist interviews will take place at the School in the week commencing 12th January 2026.
- Shortlist interviews will be held at the School in the week commencing 19th January 2026.

Canford School is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of our Community and encourages applications from all suitably qualified candidates.

Canford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The appointment is subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance, including an enhanced DBS check, satisfactory references, proof of identity and qualifications, and a satisfactory medical report.

N.B. Safer recruitment checks will be made at all stages in the recruitment process.

Founded in 2001 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. RSAcademics is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in schools. Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.