



CLONGOWES
CLONGOWES WOOD COLLEGE SJ

HEADMASTER/ HEADMISTRESS

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

A unique opportunity to lead a historic, thriving Catholic boys' boarding school in the Jesuit tradition in County Kildare, Ireland.

The opportunity to lead Clongowes from August 2027 is an exciting and demanding one. The new appointee will be following the outstanding 12-year leadership of the College's first lay Head, Mr Chris Lumb. This is a position suited to an exceptional, visionary educator who is ambitious to lead a dynamic seven-day boarding school with a longstanding tradition of academic excellence, character formation, innovative learning and sporting achievement. Clongowes Wood College offers a rich heritage, sense of community, and a forward-thinking holistic vision of education. The most recent Department of Education inspection report stated that "A strong sense of community and belonging lay at the core of school life, and this was consistently identified by students, parents, staff, and the board as a defining characteristic of the school."

Clongowes Wood College is one of Ireland's premier Catholic schools, set on a historic 500-acre estate in the heart of the Kildare countryside, 30 kilometres from Dublin City. Since its foundation in 1814, Clongowes has educated young men who go on to serve as leaders in business, sport, politics, and the arts.

In searching for its next Head, Clongowes is both clear in its criteria and ambitious for its future: the College seeks a leader with a genuine commitment to the Jesuit ethos of forming young men of Competence, Conscience, and Compassion, while also demonstrating the strategic and operational acumen to lead a thriving residential community of 425 full-time boarders and a large team of dedicated staff across academic, sporting, cultural and pastoral disciplines, and support functions. Candidates will require a dynamic understanding of the Irish education landscape. The post is residential.

An opportunity such as this is rare and has the potential to be a career-defining experience for the right candidate.





THE SCHOOL



Clongowes Wood College commands a special place in the Irish educational environment. As an all-boys, seven-day boarding school deeply rooted in the Jesuit ethos, and as a member of HMC (Heads' Conference), it offers a warm, secure, and supportive home from home for students from across Ireland and internationally.

Clongowes operates as an integrated living and learning community where academic rigour is complemented by extensive co-curricular, spiritual, and social engagement. From a proud rugby and sporting heritage to strong artistic traditions, the College provides a broad, dynamic and sought-after education. Clongowes prides itself on providing an environment where every boy is nurtured to fulfil his individual potential.

Boarding is integral to life at Clongowes. The College offers full seven-day boarding with extended monthly weekend breaks. Emphasis is placed on fostering a warm, happy atmosphere where cooperative learning, mutual respect, and close-knit relationships between students and staff are fundamental. Safeguarding is taken very seriously. A thriving Parents' Association, Ladies' Association, Past Pupils Union and Foundation are all testament to the strength of this special community.

HISTORY AND ETHOS

The school [website](#) offers an extensive account of a storied past, rich in detail and incident. Candidates are encouraged to explore this resource.

Founded in 1814, Clongowes has entered its 213th academic year of delivering transformational education. As a Catholic school in the Jesuit tradition, the core philosophy is rooted in Ignatian pedagogy, which emphasises the development of the whole person: intellectually, spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

Two central pillars define the Clongowes experience:

- **Men for Others:** Fostering a deep sense of social responsibility, faith, and service to the wider world.
- **Competence, Conscience and Compassion:** Guiding students to achieve high academic, sporting and cultural standards while growing into morally grounded, empathetic individuals.

At Clongowes, care of the individual (*cura personalis*) is at the heart of everything. The school community actively celebrates commitment and involvement across academic subjects, rugby and sports, performing arts, debating, and social outreach.

ADMISSIONS & STUDENT PROFILE

Clongowes welcomes 425 boarding boys aged 12 to 18 (First Year to Sixth Year/Leaving Certificate). Students join from all over Ireland, the UK, continental Europe, and internationally.

ALBERTO HURTADO BURSARY

Ten per cent of the student population comprises boys who have been selected for the AHP Bursary, which offers the opportunity to attend the College to boys who would not otherwise be able to do so due to social and economic constraints. This sought-after bursary is a non-academic award, which goes to boys who are considered to be most in need and who will best benefit from the opportunities it affords. The AHP cohort of students are a valued constituency who greatly add to school life, contributing at every level.

LOCATION AND FACILITIES

Clongowes is situated in Clane, County Kildare, just 30 kilometres from Dublin City, offering easy access to the capital, Dublin Airport, and major transport arteries.

The College benefits from outstanding academic facilities. These include the James Joyce library, state-of-the-art science laboratories, a custom-built Art Room, and the innovative Betagh Room designed to facilitate collaborative learning. The Bellarmine Learning Centre is a modern study and homework space designed to accommodate diverse learning styles for younger students. A new Arts Centre is due to open in January 2027 and will include studios, practice rooms, and performance spaces. In addition, there are several spaces for community worship and prayer, including the Boys' Chapel, the People's Church and the Ignatian Chapel.

Complementing its educational and spiritual spaces, the College provides comprehensive boarding and communal facilities designed to support everyday student life and wellness. Accommodation options transition from year-group social dormitories in younger years to single and en-suite double rooms with study desks for senior students. All are supported by resident boarding staff, recreation rooms, kitchenettes, and laundry facilities. Daily dining takes place in the Refectory, which serves four meals a day with year-group and House-table seating, as well as outdoor picnic tables and shared staff dining. Excellent sports and leisure facilities further round out the campus, providing students with expansive opportunities for physical activity and personal growth.

For a virtual tour of the school, please click [here](#).





ACADEMICS AND CURRICULUM

Academic life at Clongowes is defined by an expectation of high academic standards, a commitment to cooperative learning and personalised support for students to ensure every boy can reach his full potential.

The curriculum follows the Irish Junior Cycle (Junior Cert) and Senior Cycle (Leaving Certificate) frameworks, preparing boys for entry into leading universities in Ireland, the UK, Europe, and the United States.

Key features of the academic approach include:

- **Cooperative Learning:** Nurturing collaborative problem-solving, critical thinking, and intellectual curiosity.
- **Personalised Mentoring:** Ensuring small class sizes and regular academic tracking so every student achieves his potential.
- **Breadth of Subject Choice:** Strong focus across STEM subjects, humanities, modern languages, classical studies, and creative arts.
- The **Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP):** A holistic teaching and learning model derived from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, characterised by the three pillars of Competence, Conscience and Compassion.

Highly committed and experienced teachers ensure that the students receive the highest standards of tuition and are supported as active participants on their academic journey.

The **Junior Cycle** encompasses the first 3 years at Clongowes. There is a broad range of core and elective subjects studied during this time, culminating in the Junior Certificate exam, taken at the end of Third Year.

As one of the first schools in Ireland to introduce a **Transition Year**, Clongowes provides a broad curriculum that blends academic studies with work experience, social placements, foreign exchanges, and outdoor education. Designed to foster independence and personal growth, the programme

encourages students to become “Men for Others,” highlighted by their student-led fundraising drive, which, to date, has raised over €2 million for Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital, Crumlin.

Clongowes offers a comprehensive **Senior Cycle** curriculum where students typically select seven or eight subjects from a choice of over 20 for the Leaving Certificate, including the core subjects of English, Mathematics, and Irish (unless exempt). To satisfy third-level entry requirements, boys select a modern language – French, German or Spanish – alongside a wide array of options ranging from Applied Mathematics and Computer Science to Politics and Society, Agricultural Science, Physical Education and Music. This broad academic framework is tailored to realistically support each student’s individual abilities and aspirations.

BOARDING AND PASTORAL CARE

Clongowes provides a full seven-day boarding education that mirrors family life for 425 boys from Ireland and abroad. It is centred on the core Jesuit principle of *cura personalis* – nurturing and respecting all aspects of each individual, including their physical, emotional, spiritual and social wellbeing. Each year group is led by a dedicated team of Housemasters and Housemistresses, known in Clongowes as Prefects. Boarding Prefects act *in loco parentis* to provide a warm, family-like environment, maintaining close communication with parents to support each boy as he grows. Wraparound support is provided by dedicated cross-functional Care Teams, including the school counsellor, nurses, Spiritual Father, Learning Support teachers, and Academic Year Heads.

Each student in the College belongs to one of ten “Houses”, which provides further social support as they mix with boys from every year group within their House. The structured daily routine balances formal classes, evening study, and co-curricular activities, with regular monthly long-weekend breaks and optional Saturday night leaves to keep families closely connected.

SPORT

Clongowes has a long and distinguished sporting tradition, and its facilities are regarded as some of the best in Ireland. With rugby as its primary sport, Clongowes has won the Leinster Schools Rugby Senior Cup on nine occasions, most recently in 2020. Its alumni have played at the highest levels of domestic, European, and international rugby, both for Ireland and the British and Irish Lions.

The school offers extensive sports and fitness facilities in numerous areas, including an all-weather pitch and surrounding grass pitches, tennis courts and a TrackMan golf simulator. Indoors, students have access to a fully equipped gym and weights room, large sports hall with basketball and badminton courts, and a 25-metre, five-lane swimming pool, opened in 2017. The College also has its own nine-hole golf course on site. From track and field to Gaelic games, soccer, cricket, water sports, and more, these amenities support a wide range of activities participated in at every level – fostering friendship, teamwork, and personal achievement across the student body.

CO-CURRICULAR

Beyond academics and sports, Clongowes places a strong emphasis on culture, creativity, and presentation to foster the personal growth of students. The vibrant Performing Arts Department enables over 200 students to have instrumental and voice lessons and supports a junior and senior choir, a traditional music group, and an orchestra. Students actively participate in drama and LAMDA lessons and enjoy all aspects of staging annual musical theatre productions.

Every boy is encouraged to participate in debating and public speaking once they enter the College. Students form teams to build structured reasoning, critical thinking, conviction and presentation skills. Senior students can join “The Academy,” where they hone their research, analysis and communication skills as they prepare to deliver a 40-minute scholarly presentation on a subject of their choice, which they will be required to defend via a question-and-answer session with their peers and an invited audience.



GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Clongowes is governed by a Board of Management operating under the auspices of the Jesuit Education Trust. The Head of School serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the College, reporting to the Board.

The Senior Management Team comprises:

Headmaster	Mr Chris Lumb
Deputy Headmaster	Mr Paul McCormack
Director of Ethos	Ms Elisabeth Clarke
Director of Admissions & Communications	Ms Áine Corcoran
Head of Boarding	Mr Steven Gray
Director of Studies	Ms Helen Hickson
Director of Finance and Administration	Ms Denise Nichol
Assistant Head of Boarding	Mr Matthew Wright





LIVING AT CLONGOWES



HOUSING

The Head's house is located on the Clongowes campus, in proximity to the school but enjoying a private situation. It is a modern, four-bedroom family house constructed in 2019 and finished to a very high standard.

LOCATION

Clongowes' location offers a blend of countryside living and modern convenience. The historic 500-acre estate in Kildare affords families the opportunity to avail of all the on-site facilities and the outdoor pursuits which country living offers.

Close proximity to the vibrant towns of Clane, Maynooth and Naas provides access to all amenities, including shopping, dining, theatre, social clubs and entertainment.

Dublin City is easily accessed by car or public transport and opens up the vista of cultural, social and sporting options which abound there. In addition, County Kildare's rich sporting legacy – renowned for championship golf courses, horse racing at the Curragh, and scenic walking trails along the Grand Canal – adds a vibrant local backdrop to daily living.

JESUIT COMMUNITY

Also located on site is the Jesuit Community, who live in separate accommodation in the historic Castle, and whose presence underpins the importance of the Order's role in the College. Led by Fr. Rector, the Community plays an active role in College life spiritually and pastorally.





THE ROLE



This role presents a rare opportunity for an appropriately experienced educational professional to guide one of Ireland's most historic and prestigious schools into its next era of growth and distinction.

The new Head will inherit a thriving, financially stable institution with an exceptional reputation, strong enrolment, and an active global network of alumni (Old Clongownians). Clongowes offers an extensive infrastructure that seamlessly integrates academic, creative, and spiritual life. The position demands strong instructional and pastoral leadership, commercial and operational capability, and the personal presence to act as the chief ambassador for the College. Authenticity, emotional intelligence, and a genuine commitment to a seven-day boarding environment are essential, as is the willingness to be visible in the wider Clongowes community, especially with the very active alumni and parent groups who value and expect clear, authentic communication.

The Head will report to the 12-strong Board and inherit a strong leadership team as described above. The school engenders great loyalty and affection, and the Head will need to be sensitive to tradition while being unafraid to champion innovation and improvement as required by an ever-evolving education environment.

The Head must offer a compelling vision for the future that will distinguish Clongowes from other schools. The College is looking for a leader who not only models but energetically projects the values and many benefits of a Clongowes education. The Head should be equally at home with the strategic, quotidian, and ambassadorial aspects of leading a great school. Support and fellowship will be offered by other Heads within the Jesuit group of schools, the Irish HMC Division of Heads, and other associations.





PERSON SPECIFICATION

Clongowes seeks a visionary and decisive educational leader who lives the Jesuit ethos, listens well, builds teams and combines strategic and commercial judgement with care for students and staff. Integrity, courage, reflective judgement and the ability to communicate and carry through a shared vision are essential.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

It is *essential* that the successful candidate has the following:

- A university degree, preferably at postgraduate level, and a teaching qualification. *(Please note the Head will be required to register with the Teaching Council of Ireland, if not already in membership.)*
- Proven record of senior leadership (ideally Head or Deputy Head level) in an independent school (ideally boarding) or leading secondary school.
- Experience in strategic planning, financial management, and leading multi-disciplinary teams.
- A minimum of 15 years' relevant teaching experience.
- Experience of an approach to education that resonates with Clongowes' ethos, values and aims.
- Demonstrable knowledge of the Irish education system and landscape.



ATTRIBUTES & SKILLS

- Strong commitment to Catholic/Jesuit educational values and holistic character formation.
- High emotional intelligence, authenticity, and excellent public communication skills.
- Deep understanding of seven-day boarding life and pastoral care for young men.
- Commercial and strategic insight to drive enrollment, development, and long-term sustainability.
- Resilience and adaptability.
- Community focus and high visibility.
- Commitment to the continuous professional development of all staff.
- Energy to achieve and personify the aspirations and priorities of the school.
- Awareness of the Head's responsibilities, as the Designated Liaison Person, in relation to safeguarding and child protection issues and a commitment to delivering best practice in safeguarding.
- Diplomatic and ambassadorial skills to maintain good internal and external relationships.
- Commitment to high standards and continual improvement.
- Experience of successful high-performance sporting environments.



JOB DESCRIPTION

This **sample job description** is not specific to Clongowes but gives an indication of the statutory duties and four leadership domains in the **Looking at Our School 2022** framework in Ireland. Beyond this, Clongowes expects the incoming Head to:

LEADERSHIP

- Provide effective direct leadership for senior colleagues across all areas.
- Uphold and support the vision of the College.
- Ensure data is used to inform effective planning.
- Lead by example, establishing a collaborative learning ethos by promoting and sharing good practice, supporting colleagues and developing a culture of learning from each other and externally.
- Remain well informed about national and international trends in order that the strategic direction matches the needs of all learners and the vision for the College.
- Ensure effective communication is established and maintained with colleagues, students, parents, Board members, alumni and other external providers.
- Foster strong relationships with potential state and fee-paying feeder school heads and staff.
- Keep up to date with the inspection regime and ensure the College is fully compliant across all areas.

GENERAL

- Oversee the overall academic and social welfare of the students.
- Maintain an in-depth understanding of and a contagious enthusiasm for learning.
- Oversee the planning, preparation and delivery of teaching and learning.
- Ensure a vibrant, creative experience for students and other stakeholders across the College.
- Ensure all students are given the support and opportunity to develop their full potential according to their needs.
- Develop and promote the use of technology, as appropriate.
- Ensure personal progress is regularly discussed by teachers with students, with meaningful feedback on students’ written work, in line with school assessment policy.
- Ensure high-quality feedback to colleagues and parents about students’ work and behaviour.
- Promote an environment that ensures all aspects of the health and safety of students, staff and visitors at the College.

BOARDING AND PASTORAL CARE

- Provide a secure and caring boarding environment which is a home from home for the students.
- Promote the welfare of each individual child, including through rigorous safeguarding protocols.
- Ensure the effective operation of individualised and comprehensive pastoral care incorporating all necessary child protection measures.
- Promote the spiritual, moral and social development of each student in line with regulatory requirements.



**BUSINESS AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

- Work closely with the Head of Finance to manage operating budgets, capital investment, and facilities maintenance.
- Lead marketing, admissions, and advancement initiatives, maintaining strong connections with parents, prospective families, and Old Clongownians.
- Manage, monitor and review the range, quality and quantity of resources to improve the quality of learning and teaching, improve efficiency and secure value for money.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATION
& DEVELOPMENT**

- Keep up to date with new pedagogy/new technologies/ curriculum initiatives and their use and impact to enhance learning across all subject areas.
- Comply with all school policies and procedures.
- Ensure curriculum/lesson planning is appropriately maintained, monitored and recorded.
- Be accountable for all aspects of health and safety and reporting defects.
- Be fully involved in the life of the College, including evening and weekend activities, extra-curricular events, INSET and other duties throughout the academic year.



SAFEGUARDING

- Act as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
- Comply with all safeguarding policies, procedures, and codes of conduct.
- Demonstrate a personal commitment to safeguarding and student wellbeing.
- Ensure that any safeguarding concerns or incidents are reported appropriately in line with policy.
- Engage in safeguarding training as required.

REMUNERATION

Highly competitive salary package commensurate with experience and qualifications, plus on-site accommodation and benefits.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Application forms are available from the RSAcademics [website](#).

All interviews will be conducted by the College's Recruitment Committee.

Closing date: Monday 23 November 2026, 9.00am GMT.

Two members of the RSAcademics team are primarily engaged in this process:

- Chris Edwards, Senior Advisor for International Appointments: chrisedwards@rsacademics.com
- Jean Sullivan, Head of International Search: jeansullivan@rsacademics.com

Interested candidates are invited to contact Jean Sullivan by email to arrange introductory conversations about the role with Jean and Chris.

Applications should be made electronically to RSAcademics. To submit your application, please upload your documents according to the instructions on the RSAcademics [website](#).

You should submit the following (in PDF format):

- A completed application form (available alongside this candidate information on the RSAcademics [website](#)).

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

- Alison Hooper, Project Manager (Leadership Appointments): applications@rsacademics.com / +44 (0)20 4626 9791.

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 RSAcademics by telephone.
- First-round interviews (either in-person or online) with the College will take place **14–15 December 2026**.
- Second-round interviews will take place at the College in **January 2027**.

The College will collect references for candidates who progress to the later stages of the process.

Clongowes is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. An appointment to Clongowes is conditional on Garda Vetting clearance, and the successful candidate will be required to supply the necessary information and documentary evidence. References will be obtained on all candidates called for final interview, and applicants should be aware that questions relating to the candidates' suitability to work in a post involving children will be asked throughout the recruitment process.

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

RSAcademics is a global executive search and consultancy firm working exclusively with schools. For more than 20 years, we've supported governors and leaders at pivotal moments – whether they are appointing senior staff or making complex strategic decisions.

What makes us distinctive is the depth of first-hand experience in schools across our team – as heads, governors, bursars and senior professionals – combined with specialist expertise in areas such as strategy, research, marketing and finance. This blend is continually enriched by our ongoing consultancy and appointments work with schools worldwide, so our advice is always current, practical and evidence led. Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.

