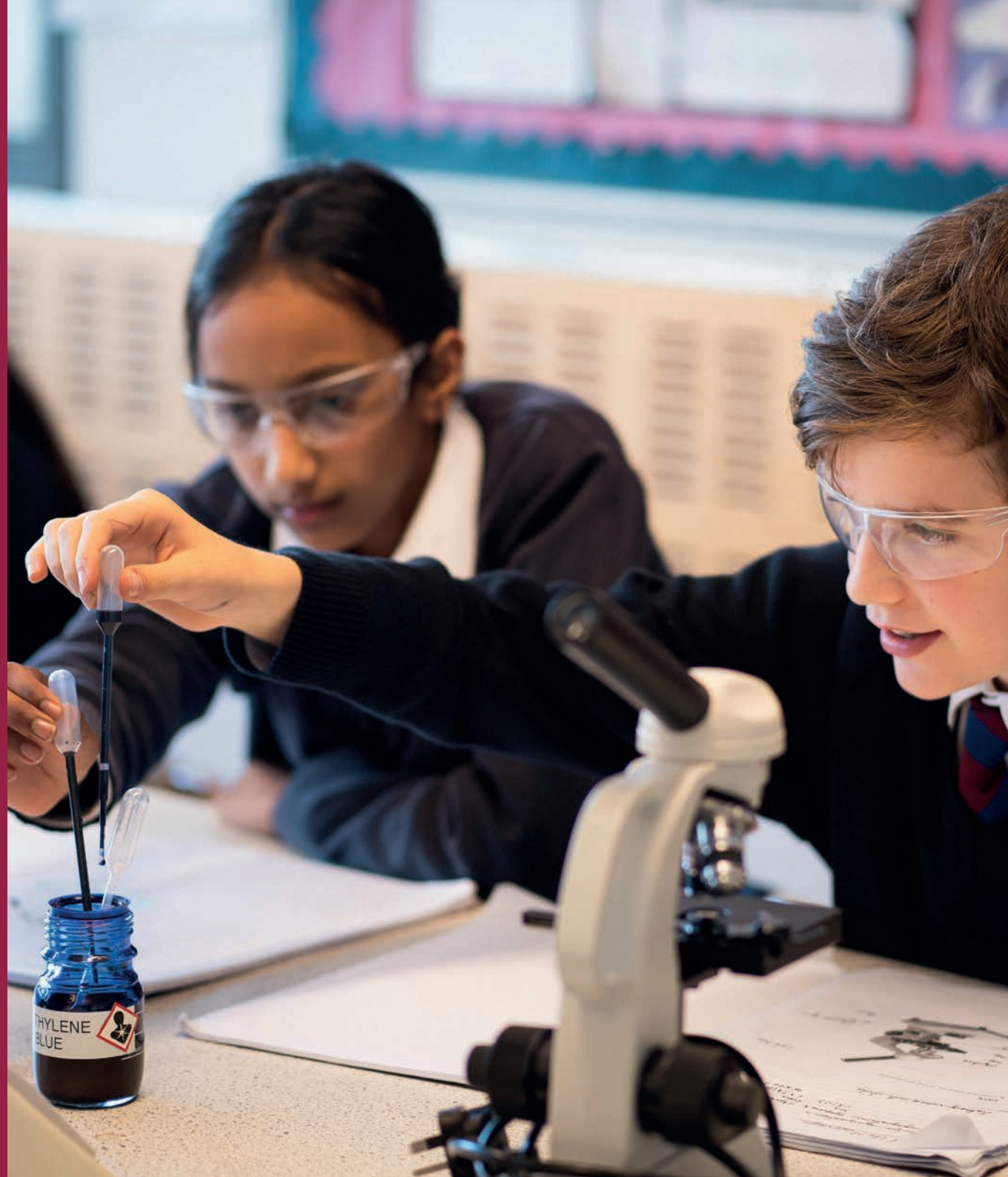


# HIGHGATE

## Chair of Governors

Candidate Information



# Welcome from the Chair of Governors

After 28 years on the Highgate School governing body, including ten as Chair, I have decided that now is the right time for me to step down.

Having been a Highgate pupil myself, I can attest to the changes the School has undergone while establishing itself as the first-rate educational establishment and charity it now is. I can also promise that my fellow governors, drawn as they are from a range of backgrounds and experiences, share my desire to keep Highgate moving forwards and do so with expertise, vim and vigour. My successor will be privileged to lead such an excellent team.

The new Chair will also have the opportunity to work closely with the Head, Adam Pettitt, and his top team to develop the School's future plans and monitor its current ones. The relationship with Adam is crucial, and one I have enjoyed very much: his energy, drive and evident desire to ensure a Highgate education is the very best it can be are genuinely inspirational.

Highgate is in robust good health, but there will be fascinating work to do. Highgate International School Thailand is an exciting new venture; we have significant capital projects planned; our partnership with the London Academy of Excellence Tottenham is of significant local public benefit, as is our ambitious bursary programme which we are keen to extend still further; a competitive market means that we must look carefully at what we do and how we do it. All of these are important issues that the new Chair will have the chance to take on and help shape.

Highgate School is a fantastic place to be involved with. Thank you for taking the time to read this pack and I hope you consider applying. While I will not have a formal role in the appointment of my successor, I will be available to assist in any way I can, both before and after the appointment.

**Bob Rothenberg**  
Chair of Governors



# Introduction from the Head

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of Governors at Highgate School.

Highgate is, in reality, three schools in one: a Pre-Preparatory, a Junior and a Senior School, with strong links between all three – as well as welcoming in new pupils, mainly in Years 7 and 12.

While each school has its own identity, there are common threads that run through a Highgate education. We aspire to be a place for learning and scholarship, an exemplar for the healthy life, and a reflective community. We hold these threads so dear that they are literally carved in the stone at one of our main entrances.

Together, they have helped us become a progressive, forward-thinking school that is highly regarded by parents and pupils alike. However, that does not mean the future is secure. Political and economic pressures – VAT on fees and an increasingly competitive market, balanced against our continuing desire to fulfil our public benefit goals ever more successfully – will require skilful navigation based on expertise in finding solutions and excitement at the prospect of realising new income streams.

As Head, it is my job to work with the governing body as a whole, and the Chair of Governors in particular, to ensure we can meet these headwinds and come out stronger. It's an endlessly fascinating challenge and one with an extraordinary reward: securing the education, and thus kickstarting the futures, of the young people in our care.

I am grateful to Bob Rothenberg for his incisive counsel, constructive suggestions and acuity over the past decade, but I am also excited to work with his successor to ensure Highgate School continues to flourish.

**Adam Pettitt**  
Head



# About Us

Located in the heart of North London, Highgate is one of the UK's leading co-educational independent schools. Having celebrated our 460<sup>th</sup> year in 2025, we are steeped in history yet forging ahead in progressive, forward thinking, and creative ways.

We educate around 1,950 pupils spread across the Pre-Prep (ages 4-7, Years R, 1 and 2, c.180 pupils), Junior (ages 7-11, Years 3-6, c.440 pupils), and Senior Schools (ages 11-18, Years 7-13, c.1,330 pupils).

We currently employ approximately 650 teaching and support staff. Working here means being part of a vibrant, inclusive and welcoming community, committed to academic excellence and the highest standards of pastoral care.

## Aims and Ethos

The Highgate ethos revolves around three core values: promoting learning and scholarship for all; developing a commitment to community and our responsibilities within it; and living the healthy life by promoting kindness, friendship, individuality, collaboration and leadership.

## Alumni

Former pupils remain part of our community by becoming Old Cholmeleians (OCs). Our OCs organise a thriving programme of dinners, reunions and other social events; offering careers mentoring, advice and professional networking; and supporting OC sports teams.

## Charity and Community

We want our pupils to understand and commit to the importance of humility, community and charity. This culture is led by our Head, Adam Pettitt, who was instrumental in establishing the award-winning London Academy of Excellence with Tottenham Hotspur Football Club in 2017. Since opening, this maintained sixth form college has created a pathway to A Levels and beyond for teenagers living in one of the most deprived areas of London. The School now regularly sends dozens of pupils to Oxbridge and other Russell Group universities.

Through our Chrysalis Partnership Programme, Highgate works with over 30 state schools, from primary to sixth form, reaching over 1,000 children and young people from across London.

## Sustainability

Care for the environment is one of our core objectives, guided by a strategy plan that spans two primary areas of focus: education and action. Our pupils play a vital and inspiring role with active committees in all three schools, including an Eco-Council in the Pre-Prep. Together they have helped introduce a ban on plastic water bottles, a weekly "meat-free Monday" and set up Fast Fashion-Free February, now a national initiative which seeks to reduce the environmental and social impact of mass-produced clothing.

## Diversity and Inclusion

From the Pre-Prep to the Sixth Form we are actively seeking to embed a real sense of belonging at Highgate. To do this, we are evaluating diversity in our curricular and co-curricular life; exploring how to attract pupils and staff from all backgrounds to work and learn here; and providing opportunities to share our own experiences as well as learning from alternative perspectives.



"Governors monitor the school effectively to ensure that leaders exhibit the skills and knowledge to provide clear strategic direction."

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# Facilities and Finance

**The School requires good-quality, flexible and long-lasting facilities to continue to deliver the educational experience and excellence for which it is renowned.**

We have been investing in a building improvement programme since 2002 to provide essential and fit-for-purpose workspaces for pupils, allowing them to flourish. This has included the restoration and conversion of some of the school's landmark buildings, including the new Junior School on the Bishopswood Road site.

Nevertheless, we are only part-way through our current estates strategy. We have an extensive, mixed stock of buildings and facilities on several sites, in varying states of repair. Alongside the need to refurbish these buildings, we have exciting plans to upgrade the Sixth Form Centre, Senior School Drama, Music and Science facilities and Sport and Exercise facilities, both indoors and outdoors. More details of our estates strategy, and the resultant planning applications, can be found [here](#).

The School is in good financial health and our finances are well managed. The annual gross income for year-ending 31 July 2025 was c.£51m. 90% of our income comes from school fees, but diversifying this through fundraising and commercial income, including international schools, is a priority: Highgate International School Thailand, our first such venture, opens to pupils in September 2026.

We restructured our borrowing in 2019, entering into private placement for £60m to help contribute to the funding of the estates masterplan, along with other income streams including non-fee income and sales of non-academic properties. Whilst Governors are confident that we are well placed to meet its future obligations and ambition to develop even further its public benefit activities, ensuring that the ongoing financial strategy achieves this is imperative.

Our public benefit activities are central to us being a charity: in the year-ending 31 July 2025, we spent c.£2.2m on our bursary programme and c.£1.35m on salary costs of partnership activities, including in that year seconding 8 full-time equivalent of staff to London Academy of Excellence.




# Governance

Highgate's Governors, whose biographies can be found [here](#), have a wide range of experience and skills, along with an excellent understanding of our day-to-day operations. They act as trustees of the charity, determining its strategy and policies.

The full Governing Body meets at least six times a year. There are a number of sub-committees that meet at least three times a year: Finance, Audit and Risk; Estates; Nominations and Remuneration; Safeguarding; and the Interim Advisory Group, which discusses commercial opportunities including international schools. Governors drawn from the sub-committees meet periodically to review the ethical dimensions to school policies and, where required, to consider significant matters of education policy or practice.

The Governing Body and the Senior Leadership Team hold an annual awayday to consider major strategic issues, supported by presentations and papers prepared by the School.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark green blazer over a white top and a gold necklace, is looking down at a tablet. She is surrounded by several children in maroon school uniforms. The background is a blurred classroom setting with a bulletin board and yellow flowers.

“Leaders have a clear, well-articulated vision for the school that is regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with the school’s values.”

ISI inspection 2024



## The Role

**The new Chair will succeed Bob Rothenberg, who will retire from the Board in January 2027. It is hoped that his successor will be appointed to the Board as a governor from the Autumn Term of 2026 to allow for a period of handover before taking over as Chair from January 2027.**

Governors are seeking someone with a real commitment to Highgate and the education and development of our pupils. While the role is voluntary, the Chair will have the opportunity to retain and develop Highgate's position as a leading co-educational independent school and charity; hone governance and leadership skills in a dynamic environment; and make a lasting impact on pupils, staff, and the broader school community.

Being part of a school governing body is extremely rewarding. The promotion and fostering of a first-class education in a modern co-educational environment is as important as ever, and Highgate's governors play a vital role in ensuring that the School, its pupils and staff continue to flourish. Moreover, working with the Head, Senior Leadership Team and other governors from different walks of life, all of the highest calibre, is both stimulating and a privilege.

Bob has described the role of Chair as one of the most rewarding and enjoyable he has held in his professional career. While busy and challenging, it can be done alongside a range of other activities; to that end, interest is welcome from anyone with the relevant skills regardless of current employment status (in work, out of work, retired). A lack of direct experience on a governing body need not be a hindrance: you may have "chairing" or other relevant experience drawn from other contexts. There would in any event be a full transitional period with any necessary induction and training.

### Time Commitment

There are generally six meetings of the governing body each year, held on term time evenings for around two hours, and two roughly three hour strategy meetings, usually on Saturday mornings, plus preparation for each. The Chair will also have regular meetings with the Head (Bob has done this fortnightly), catch-ups with fellow governors and ad hoc visits to get to know the School.

The Chair is also likely to sit on some of our committees. Nominations and Remuneration, Finance, Audit and Risk, and Safeguarding all meet termly. Estates meets twice termly and the Interim Advisory Group monthly (online, for an hour). Bob has dedicated about 45 hours each year to meetings alone, but we appreciate that these commitments will need to be adapted to suit the new Chair's circumstances.

# Person Specification

## Experience, Skills and Competencies

### Leadership and Governance

- Proven experience of senior leadership in a large or medium sized multi-faceted business, or governance role within the education sector, nonprofit organisation or relevant fields (*Essential*).
- Demonstrable experience of chairing meetings, committees, or boards effectively (*Essential*).
- Ability to lead and collaborate with a diverse Board of Trustees, fostering effective decision-making and collective responsibility (*Essential*).

### Strategic Thinking

- Experience in strategic planning and driving organisational improvement (*Essential*).
- Capacity to set long-term goals and prioritise objectives in the best interests of the school.
- Ability to challenge constructively and hold the school's leadership accountable for delivering agreed objectives.

### Communication and Relationship Building

- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills across diverse communities, including the ability to represent the school effectively to a variety of stakeholders (*Essential*).
- Ability to engage diplomatically with governors, staff, pupils, parents and external stakeholders.

### Analytical Skills


- Familiarity, or ability quickly to become familiar, with charity governance, legal duties and financial accountability (*Essential*).
- Competence in analysing complex issues, including financial, legal, and regulatory matters.
- Ability to interpret financial statements, school performance data and risk assessments.

### Integrity and Commitment

- Commitment to the care and safeguarding of children and young people (*Essential*).
- A strong commitment to the ethos, values and educational mission of the School.
- Personal integrity and the ability to act in the best interests of the School without conflict of interest.

### Personal Attributes

- Ability quickly to grasp and react to unfamiliar issues (*Essential*).
- Passionate advocate for education and independent schools, with a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the sector.
- Empathetic and approachable, with a focus on supporting the wellbeing of pupils and staff.

A young girl in a school uniform is shown in profile, raising her right hand as if participating in a lesson. She is looking towards the right side of the frame. The background is slightly blurred, showing other students in a classroom setting.

“Teaching instils an appetite for intellectual effort and fosters in pupils an ability to think and learn for themselves.”

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# Applications

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics by email to arrange an initial confidential discussion with Louisa Barham or Kate Howe who are leading the search.

Louisa Barham, Search Consultant:  
[louisabarham@rsacademics.com](mailto:louisabarham@rsacademics.com)

Kate Howe, Search Consultant:  
[katehowe@rsacademics.com](mailto:katehowe@rsacademics.com)

Initial screening will be undertaken by RSAcademics. The School will undertake interviews with selected candidates.

*The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service, and a review of their social media presence. All appointments are subject to a criminal background check and proof of qualifications in accordance with the requirements of the Children Act.*

## About RSAcademics

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. Please visit [www.rsacademics.com](http://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.*

“Robust self-evaluation, informed by deep engagement with the school community, ensures informed decision-making.”

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