THE Leys
CAMBRIDGE

St Faith's
CAMBRIDGE



CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

candidate information

Welcome *from the Head*

This is an exciting time to join a community with bold ambitions, strong relationships and a clear sense of purpose. As Chief Operating Officer at The Leys School, Cambridge, you will join us as we bring together two outstanding schools, The Leys and St Faith's, invest in their future and lay the foundations for wider growth. A major master planning exercise is already underway, which will guide ambitious capital investment and the development of exciting new facilities.

We aspire to make The Leys School, Cambridge the cornerstone of a wider educational group, extending its impact and opening new possibilities for collaboration, innovation and growth. A new executive leadership structure will provide the strategic capacity and expertise this next stage requires. The Chief Operating Officer will play a pivotal role in the Executive Team, with a remit encompassing human resources, estate development and stewardship, administration, and marketing, communications and admissions. You will connect strategic ambition with practical action, helping build a sustainable organisation ready to grow.

Our ambitions are bold, but our purpose remains deeply personal. Rooted in our Methodist heritage, we champion kindness, integrity, scholarship and service. We want every member of our community to be known, valued and supported to flourish. Belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion are fundamental to our culture. We are committed to creating an environment in which every individual feels respected, heard and empowered to succeed, and where different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives enrich our collective life.



We are looking for a colleague who sees possibilities, brings people together and makes things happen: someone with strategic vision, sound judgement and the energy to turn ideas into lasting improvements. You will find a community ready to think creatively, embrace opportunity and work together towards a shared future.

If you are excited by the prospect of helping us build that future, I warmly invite you to apply.

With best wishes,

Clare Ives
Head, The Leys

About The Leys and St Faith's

The Leys and St Faith's Schools Foundation is a registered charity which owns two independent schools in the heart of Cambridge. The Governors of The Leys acquired St Faith's in 1938 and established the Foundation. Situated less than half a mile apart, the two schools will merge in September 2028 to become a single all-through school, The Leys School, Cambridge, offering a seamless educational journey from Early Years to Sixth Form.





The Leys

Founded in 1875 by the Methodist Conference, The Leys is a co-educational boarding and day school for around 570 pupils aged between 11 and 18 set in the heart of the beautiful and stimulating city of Cambridge, one of the world's leading cultural and academic centres. Located on 50 acres, the site includes state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities, 11 boarding and day houses, a first class music school, a professional standard theatre, a sports centre with gym and cricket lanes as well as an astro, extensive grass pitches and an indoor swimming pool.

The Leys values its history, yet it blends traditional values - courtesy, respect, decency- with a forward and outward looking approach to education. In the spirit of its Methodist founders and its Christian values, the School seeks to send Leysians out into the world ready – academically, culturally, morally, physically, spiritually and socially – to live fulfilling lives which will make a positive contribution to society. It is a close knit, engaged, friendly community in which pastoral care is seen as the top priority. The 2025 ISI report identified the school culture and the sense of community as a significant strength.

Boarding is central to the ethos of the School and around 60% of pupils are accommodated in boarding houses.

Academic results are strong with 78.3% of A level grades at A* to B this year and 73% of GCSE grades 9-7. The Wider Curriculum has traditionally been one of the main pillars upon which a Leysian education is built and the School offers an extensive programme of sport, performance arts, outdoor pursuit and other activities. Pupils also benefit from The Leys' unique location allowing them unrivalled access to the vast array of cultural and educational opportunities that Cambridge has to offer.

Cambridge benefits from good transport links with around five trains per hour to London King's Cross and Liverpool Street. Stansted Airport is less than a 30 minute drive or 15 minute rail journey.

St Faith's

St Faith's is a co-educational day school with around 530 pupils aged 3 to 13. Around half of pupils currently join The Leys at age 13. The School was founded in 1884 to meet the educational needs of the children of Cambridge University Fellows.

Today St Faith's seeks to be a happy, inclusive and supportive community which welcomes families from all religious and cultural backgrounds. Underpinned by Christian values, every child is nurtured as infinitely valuable and uniquely gifted members of the St Faith's family. The School aims to cultivate strength of character, distinguished inter-personal qualities, distinctive leadership ability and a keen sense of social responsibility. The innovative curriculum and future-focused education builds on a strong academic heritage and promotes excellence in all areas.

The nine-acre site includes a state-of-the-art STEM centre for science, mathematics, computing and design as well as specialist facilities for music and drama. The Pre-Prep and Pre-School have their own dedicated classrooms and play areas known as Southfield. There is an indoor Sports Centre, extensive playing fields, tennis and netball courts and a Forest School. St Faith's pupils also use The Leys' swimming pool and playing fields at Latham Road.





The Next Chapter

A Single All-through School

On the merger of the two schools, The Leys site will become the Upper School, accommodating Years 9–13. Years 7 and 8 will move to the St Faith's site, creating additional capacity in Years 9–11, where there is strong demand for places, and enabling the Upper School to grow to over 600 pupils.

The St Faith's site will be home to the Lower School, from Early Years to Year 6, and the Middle School, for Years 7–8 with pupil numbers growing to circa 580. Each school will have its own distinct identity and experience appropriate to the age of the pupils they cater for.





Building for Future Growth

The Foundation's ambition extends beyond the merger. The intention is to build a wider group, beginning with nursery provision, potentially on the St Faith's site, and partnerships, followed by consideration of domestic expansion and, in time, international opportunities. These strands remain at exploratory stages and will require careful assessment and planning.

A master plan is being developed for both The Leys and the St Faith's sites. Priorities under consideration include a new day house at The Leys, improvements to the Sixth Form experience, and preparation of the St Faith's campus for a distinct Middle School.

Refurbishment of the science labs is also being explored and there is a longer-term aspiration for a more integrated sports complex.

Sustainability is a strategic priority, including moving the campuses towards net zero.

Leadership and governance

The Leys and St Faith's Schools Foundation is an incorporated charitable company limited by guarantee, charity number 1144035 and company number 7748737.

The Foundation is responsible for both Schools and has a single overarching Board of Governors, whose members are the trustees of the charity and the directors of the charitable company. With an annual turnover of circa £35M, net assets of over £50M and no borrowing, the Foundation is a substantial organisation and financially robust.

The Board is responsible for the overall management and control of both schools and Its work is currently supported by The Leys Local Governing Body and The St Faith's Local Governing Body.

A transition to a single Board structure is planned ahead of the merger chaired by the current chair of the Foundation Board.

Day-to-day management is currently delegated by the Board to the respective school Heads and Bursars, supported by their Senior Management Teams. With the transition to a single Board structure and the formation of The Leys School, Cambridge, the Executive Team will be led by Clare Ives, the current Head of The Leys School. Reporting to the Head, and a key member of the Executive Team, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) will provide strategic leadership across Estates and Facilities, Site Operations, HR, Marketing, Admissions and Communications and Administration. A shared professional services structure will be established across both schools by September 2027, ahead of the merger.





Chief Operating Officer







The Opportunity

This is a compelling opportunity to shape the next chapter of two school communities. The Head and Governors seek an accomplished, strategically minded and collaborative COO to translate the Foundation's ambitions into effective operational delivery: bringing professional services together, preparing for the September 2028 merger, delivering the capital projects and building the capacity and operations for longer-term growth. Reporting to the current Head of The Leys and working closely with the St Faith's Head and the Executive Team, the COO will help create the operational foundations for The Leys School, Cambridge.

Joining at a pivotal point in the transition, the COO will establish the structures, partnerships and ways of working that will underpin the future school. The anticipated start date is May/June 2027, allowing handover from the current Leys School Bursar and preparation for the shared support structure planned for September 2027. The initial focus will be to unite professional services across both sites around a shared educational purpose, building trust, clear accountabilities and consistent standards while sustaining high-quality services.

The remit spans Estates and Facilities, Site Operations, HR, Marketing, Admissions and Communications and Administration. Working through functional leaders and coordinating in-house teams and outsourced providers, the COO will integrate these services into a coherent operating model and implement the site master plans that support excellent pupil experiences, effective day-to-day operations and future development.

Working closely with the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) on budgets, investment, procurement and operational risk, and with the Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) on growth and commercial opportunities, the COO will translate ambition into practical delivery. For a leader who enjoys bringing people together and turning strategy into lasting change, this role offers the chance to shape how the Foundation operates, develops and grows.

The successful candidate will combine strategic vision with the energy and discipline to deliver. They will bring a proven track record of senior operational leadership, strategic planning and commercial acumen, alongside the ability to motivate multi-disciplinary teams and build strong partnerships between teaching and professional services. Experience in the education sector is not essential, but candidates must demonstrate understanding of, and commitment to the purpose, aims and vision of a high-performing independent boarding school.

Key responsibilities

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

Strategy, Integration and Change

- Work with the Head, Executive Team and Governors to translate the Foundation's strategic ambitions into deliverable operational plans.
- Lead the integration of the COO's professional services functions across both schools, establishing clear responsibilities, consistent service standards and effective collaboration.
- Prepare operational services for the September 2028 merger and the relocation of Years 7 and 8, maintaining continuity for pupils, families and staff.
- Build realistic implementation plans with milestones, dependencies, resource requirements and reporting arrangements agreed with the Executive Team.
- Contribute operational assessment and integration planning to nursery, domestic acquisition and potential international initiatives, working with the CFO and CCO.

Leadership and People

- Develop a cohesive professional services team, ensuring that colleagues understand their contribution to the Foundation's educational purpose.
- Build constructive partnerships between teaching and support staff, valuing both equally and encouraging shared ownership of progress.
- Support functional leaders in establishing appropriate team structures, capacity, professional development and succession arrangements.
- Lead change through clear communication, consultation and timely decisions, with sensitivity to the identities and traditions of both schools.
- Foster a culture of service, accountability, continuous improvement, inclusion and staff wellbeing.

Estates, Facilities, Services and Sustainability

- Contribute to the master plan for both sites and lead the operational delivery of projects.
- Work with the Director of Facilities and professional advisers to plan and deliver capital projects to agreed scope, programme and budget.
- Ensure effective maintenance of buildings, grounds and facilities, protecting the quality of the school environment and identifying priorities for investment.
- Oversee site security.
- Ensure reliable, high-quality site operations, facilities and transport services to budget across both schools.
- Oversee catering and domestic service arrangements, including outsourced contracts and in-house provision, ensuring quality, value and consistency.
- Embed sustainability in the estates agenda and service delivery, working with the schools' sustainability leads towards the strategic ambition for net-zero campuses.



HR and Administration

- Work with the Director of HR to build an HR function which has the capacity to support change and growth.
- Oversee the provision of an effective pro-active HR function that follows best practice including recruitment, induction and training, contract documentation, remuneration and reward strategies, pension arrangements and benefits, performance, retention, record management and staff wellbeing.
- Ensure the Head, Executive Team and department heads have access to advice and data to manage employment matters and that organisational change is supported by fair and consistent processes.
- Develop efficient reception, administration and executive support services across both sites.
- Agree clear accountabilities for day-to-day administration and service continuity within the future structure.

Marketing, Admissions and Communications

- Support the Director of Marketing and Admissions to develop and lead an integrated strategy for pupil recruitment, retention, marketing and communications, aligned with educational priorities and the transition to The Leys School, Cambridge.
- Strengthen the articulation of the schools' shared proposition while respecting their existing communities during the transition.
- Ensure a responsive, consistent experience for prospective and current families, from first enquiry through admissions and onward progression.
- Use admissions and retention information to inform recruitment priorities, capacity planning and Executive Team decisions.
- Coordinate clear and timely merger communications for pupils, parents, staff and other stakeholders.

Executive Partnership, Governance and Growth

- Work closely with the CFO and CCO so that operational delivery, financial planning and commercial development are aligned.
- Provide clear reports and recommendations to the Head, Executive Team and relevant Board and Governors' committees on the COO's areas of responsibility.
- Identify and manage operational risks, contributing to Foundation-wide risk and business continuity arrangements.
- Support the Head and Director of Development with operational planning for capital fundraising and implementation.
- Assess the operational implications of potential commercial use of facilities and growth initiatives and support the delivery.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

All members of staff are expected to have proper regard for the School's safeguarding policy and procedures which includes undertaking necessary training and can be found be found here. The Leys 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

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 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 delivery.
- Understanding of strategic marketing, admissions or customer recruitment, communications, HR and administrative service delivery.
- Experience of estates, facilities or capital project oversight, including working effectively with contractors and professional advisers.
- 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 ability to translate strategic goals into practical actions.
- Strong commercial acumen and budget management with the ability to easily assimilate, analyse, interpret and present data and assess risk.
- Demonstrable knowledge of property, HR and health and safety 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 collaborative leader who can work both independently and as a key team member to inspire confidence in all stakeholders and encourage and motivate staff.
- A practical, delivery-focused approach, agile, balancing ambition with attention to detail and operational continuity.
- 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.
- Calmness, kindness and commitment to an inclusive, highly collaborative, service-oriented school community.
- Values and promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.

Terms of *appointment*

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 main benefits are likely to include:

- Annual holiday entitlement of 28 days plus statutory bank holidays.
- Rent free family accommodation is available.
- Contributory pension scheme with life assurance.
- A generous fee remission for children who meet entrance criteria.
- Medical insurance for the postholder.
- Complimentary lunch during term time.
- Free membership of the Sports Centre.
- An Employee Assistance Programme.
- Cycle to Work scheme.

The Leys is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. As 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 receipt of satisfactory references, DBS and other statutory checks, proof of identity and eligibility to work in the UK, completion of a medical questionnaire and proof of qualifications.



How to *Apply*



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

The deadline for receipt of applications is **10.00am** on **Monday 7th December 2026**.

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:

- A completed **application form** (available to download from www.rsacademics.com).
- A **covering letter** addressed to the Head, Dr Clare Ives. 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 Jonathan Barnes, Project Coordinator, at applications@rsacademics.com. Jonathan can also be reached by calling our **Head Office on +44 (0) 204 6269 795**.

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.

- Longlist interviews with RSAcademics will take place via Microsoft Teams on 9th, 11th and 14th December 2026.
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited to visit The Leys and St Faith's in the week commencing 11th January 2027.
- Shortlist interviews will take place at The Leys in the week commencing 18th January 2027.

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.

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

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Because the world needs schools to thrive

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