



CRANLEIGH
SCHOOL
EX CULTU ROBUR

Chief Strategy Officer Candidate Information





Welcome from the Head

Dear Candidate,

This is an exciting opportunity to join Cranleigh, a prestigious independent day and boarding school set in the beautiful surroundings of the Surrey Hills, not far from Guildford.

The Chief Strategy Officer is a newly created leadership role and the first appointment of its kind at Cranleigh. The successful candidate will be my right hand, working with me to evolve and implement an ambitious strategic programme for the school and to seek out future opportunities. Having recently joined Cranleigh, it is fair to say that change is in the air, and there is renewed energy and momentum. Cranleigh has been somewhat of a hidden gem, and we are now launching a confident new strategy to establish ourselves as one of the leading independent schools in the UK.

Cranleigh's motto is Ex Cultu Robur, meaning 'From our culture comes strength', reflecting our strong sense of community and ambition. You will join us at a very exciting time of growth and expansion, both in the UK and overseas, and will be a key member of the Executive, working closely with me, Will Newman, Head of the Prep School, the Director of Operations and Compliance, and the Director of Finance.

To apply, you will have excellent financial acumen and proven experience of operating at a highly strategic level. You will enjoy working in a high-pressured but hugely supportive school environment, where we are all passionate about the Cranleigh brand and our educational offering. This is a critical role as we embark on a new era at Cranleigh, and I very much hope it is of interest.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sam Price

Head, Cranleigh School

Job Title: Chief Strategy Officer

Reports To: The Head & Governors

Time: Full-Time, Based in the School

Purpose: To act as the School's commercial adviser, bringing new skills and experience to the Executive. Shaping and implementing the next phase of Cranleigh's strategic development, including supporting further international expansion, whilst ensuring its continued UK operational and financial success.

From our culture comes strength

Our school motto ‘Ex Cultu Robur’

The School

Cranleigh School is a leading co-educational boarding and day school set in 280 acres of spectacular Surrey countryside. Cranleigh Senior educates around 700 pupils aged 13 to 18, fostering a warm and energetic community. Working in tandem, Cranleigh Prep provides a nurturing foundation for 350 pupils aged 3 to 13-years-old on its own 40-acre site just across the road, with over 90 per cent of pupils progressing naturally to Cranleigh Senior. Under the leadership of Head Samantha Price, the entire school is in a position of outstanding market strength, offering incoming leaders a secure yet highly ambitious platform from which to innovate.

Founded in 1865, Cranleigh’s historic heart lies in its Victorian red-brick Quad, though its outlook remains entirely forward-looking. Our motto, Ex Cultu Robur (“From our culture comes strength”), drives a supportive, values-based community where academic achievement and personal development go hand in hand. This ethos is built on three pillars: Aspire Boldly (being ambitious and striving for excellence in all things), Be Yourself (acting with authenticity, self awareness and confidence) and Care for Others (practising kindness, empathy and service). For incoming staff, this offers a rewarding opportunity to help guide a school that respects its heritage while fully embracing a progressive, modern education.

Our facilities blend academic ambition with creative freedom, highlighted by buildings like the award-winning van Hasselt Centre. This modern humanities hub provides a mature environment for student debate, collaboration, and independent study, working in harmony with our recently renovated Sixth Form Centre, which offers dedicated university-style spaces for older students to both work and socialise. This academic energy is matched by exceptional co-curricular facilities across sport, music, and the creative arts. Ultimately, this provides a superb, well-funded platform for incoming leaders to help shape the next chapter of Cranleigh life.

Campus and Facilities

Our campus combines original nineteenth-century buildings with modern, energy-efficient teaching and collaboration spaces. Over the past decade, we have invested significantly in updating our infrastructure, ensuring our teaching environments are fully equipped for a modern curriculum while preserving the character of the estate. The result is a highly practical, inspiring workplace where facilities are logically grouped to support pupils as they progress through the School, starting in Pre-Prep.

Cranleigh Prep operates from a secure, self-contained area tailored to younger children. Alongside traditional playing fields and secure play spaces, it features a dedicated Forest School area to encourage practical, outdoor learning. Inside, pupils benefit from specialist facilities rarely seen at this level, including a junior science laboratory, an art and design technology studio, and the Jubilee Library, all designed to build the independence needed for the transition to Cranleigh Senior.

For older pupils, the facilities scale up to support GCSE, A-level, and university preparation. Key academic and creative spaces include a Science Centre with nine fully equipped teaching laboratories, the Speech Hall with a dedicated theatre space, and extensive design, technology, and ICT suites. Our sports infrastructure is equally robust, featuring a 25-metre indoor swimming pool, a modern sports pavilion, fitness rooms, and floodlit AstroTurf pitches, giving our teaching and coaching staff the resources to deliver high-quality programmes without limitation.





A place that feels like home, where everyone plays their part



The Cranleigh Community

Cranleigh's strength has always been its community. What began with the opening of a school for the local farming community is now a local, regional, national and international community, and the desire to connect and support one another remains just as strong.

There are many facets to this community, which include:

- **The Old Cranleighan Society**, offering alumni a vibrant network, events, and a dedicated sports club.
- **The Cranleigh Network**, providing careers support and professional connections for former pupils and parents.
- **Cranleigh Friends**, bringing together parents, staff, and pupils through events, volunteering, and shared celebration.

This sense of community - warm, inclusive, and outward-looking - is central to Cranleigh's identity.



Cranleigh International

Cranleigh International has built a strong global network of schools, based on close, trusted partnerships with like-minded organisations. The current portfolio includes three schools: Abu Dhabi, which opened in 2014 and now educates more than 2,400 pupils, and two schools in China established in 2023. These schools have quickly established themselves, achieving excellent academic results and university placements while remaining true to the Cranleigh motto, Ex Cultu Robur (from our culture comes strength), through broad co-curricular programmes and active involvement in their local communities.

We are now entering a new phase of growth with a recently announced partnership in Vietnam. Working alongside the Sunshine Group, with interests spanning education, finance, construction, and technology - we will soon introduce Cranleigh's educational model to this new market. This expansion is an important part of our international strategy, offering an incoming leader the opportunity to help shape the next chapter of our global growth.

Importantly, this international success directly supports our work at home. Commercial returns from our schools overseas help to diversify our income and reduce fee dependency for Cranleigh UK. Crucially, these funds also support our social purpose, feeding directly into the Cranleigh Foundation to fund bursaries and widen access, ensuring that our international commercial activities have a lasting educational impact.

Governance and Leadership

Cranleigh School is a registered charity (No. 1070856) and a company limited by guarantee (No. 359584). A single Governing Body oversees both Cranleigh Senior and Cranleigh Prep (collectively referred to as the School).

The School's operational model includes two wholly owned trading subsidiaries: Cranleigh Enterprises Ltd, which manages commercial activities in the UK, and Cranleigh Education Services Ltd, which operates the international school business. The Cranleigh Foundation is a separate, closely aligned charity whose accounts are consolidated into the School's financial portfolio.

The Governors serve as both trustees and company directors, holding legal responsibility for Cranleigh's overall strategic direction, compliance, and financial sustainability. Strategy execution and policy monitoring are managed through seven Governor-led sub-committees and the boards of the subsidiary companies.

Day-to-day leadership and management are delegated to the Head, supported by an Executive Team comprising the Chief Strategy Officer, Prep Head, Deputy Head, Director of Operations, Director of Development, Director of Finance, Head of Events, Director of Human Resources and Director of Marketing. The School's standards and compliance are regularly assessed by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, with the most recent inspection completed in November 2025 which can be viewed [here](#).

Finance and Bursaries

Cranleigh is in a secure financial position, characterised by rising pupil numbers, robust fiscal management, and an annual gross income of £38 million in 2025 (excluding investment gains). While school fees provide our primary income, commercial activities and philanthropy contribute significantly. The Governing Body is committed to growing these alternative streams to fund ambitious estate developments and widen pupil access.

Widening access remains central to our charitable mission; last year, we awarded £1.3 million in means-tested bursaries. These life-changing opportunities are funded through commercial lettings, international business, and donations to the Cranleigh Foundation. To drive this strategy forward, the Governors have recently appointed a Director of Development to design and deliver a transformative fundraising programme.

Cranleigh's published accounts can be found [here](#).

Safeguarding and Welfare of Children

Cranleigh prioritises the safeguarding and wellbeing of every single pupil and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The postholder must comply with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy at all times, which includes undertaking necessary training. The Policy can be found [here](#).

The Opportunity

This is an exciting opportunity to work as the Head's senior partner at an ambitious and forward-thinking organisation set on expanding its global reach. The CSO, in what is a newly created and critical role, will ensure that Cranleigh's strategy is translated into coherent, affordable and deliverable action. They will act as the School's commercial adviser, bringing new skills and experience to the Executive. They will shape and implement the next phase of Cranleigh's strategic development, including delivery of ambitious estates projects and supporting further international expansion, whilst ensuring its continued UK operational and financial success.

Reporting to the Head and, through the Chair of the Finance Committee to the Governors, the CSO will be responsible for the effective leadership and management of the School's planning, finance, estates, commercial activities and IT. They will work in close partnership with the Director of Finance, The Director of Operations (also Clerk to the Governing Body and Head of Compliance) and the Executive Director of Cranleigh International to ensure strategic alignment and effective execution.

The CSO has overall responsibility for a large and diverse team of support staff, led and managed by a team of experienced and dedicated managers. The CSO's direct reports are the Director of Finance (who will also sit on the Executive), Director of Estates, Director of IT, Commercial Manager and the CSO's PA.

Candidates will have a proven track record of executive leadership, strategic planning and agility, commercial success and financial control, balancing the needs and challenges of large complex organisations, managing resources and projects, delivering results, and inspiring, motivating and developing high functioning teams. The successful candidate will be an outstanding communicator, a sophisticated and diplomatic negotiator with the ability to navigate complex relationships as well as formulate and execute initiatives and projects that will drive the School's success. The role requires ambition, drive and energy complemented by collaborative leadership and exceptional interpersonal abilities.

Prior experience in the education sector is not a prerequisite, and applications are encouraged from candidates from a diverse range of professional backgrounds who can evidence strong strategic, commercial and operational expertise across a broad range of activity. Candidates will demonstrate empathy with independent education and a proactive willingness to embrace Cranleigh's aims and ethos is essential.

“An all-rounder's paradise, yes, but the academic offering can stand up to almost any school in the land.” The Good Schools' Guide



Key Responsibilities

i) Strategic planning and delivery

- Lead whole-school strategic planning processes, translating strategic intent into prioritised, implementable plans.
- Ensure that major initiatives are properly scoped, costed, resourced and sequenced before decisions are taken.
- Establish clear implementation frameworks, milestones and review points for agreed priorities.
- Maintain oversight of delivery across complex, multi-strand initiatives, ensuring momentum and coherence.
- Ensure business risk is fully integrated into strategic planning and delivery, with clear review and oversight mechanisms.

ii) Leadership and management

- Act as a trusted adviser to the Head, providing clear, candid analysis and constructive challenge.
- Foster strong collaborative working across the senior leadership team, reducing silos and duplication.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, policies, and procedures, championing their application throughout the School.
- Support strong governance ensuring that information presented to governors is coherent, appropriately analysed and decision ready.
- Model disciplined execution, clarity of thinking and a focus on delivery.
- Manage the performance of direct reports.
- Oversee the training and professional development of direct reports and their teams.

iii) Financial and organisational strategy

- Lead strategic financial planning and modelling in partnership with the Director of Finance.
- Ensure affordability, sustainability and value for money are embedded in strategic decision-making.
- Align financial strategy with workforce planning and organisational capacity.
- Support the Head and governors with clear analysis of options, trade-offs and implications.

iv) Commercial activities, Cranleigh UK partnerships and Cranleigh International

- Oversee all UK commercial operations including the sports facilities and lettings to maximise income generation from the School's assets and infrastructure and expand into new markets to develop revenue-earning opportunities.
- Support the Head in identifying and leading partnership and M&A opportunities in the UK and

developing structures to effectively govern and manage additional schools joining the Cranleigh Schools Group.

- Work in close partnership with the Head and Executive Director of Cranleigh International to expand the network of overseas schools.
- Sit on the Cranleigh International Board (CESL) to ensure that international initiatives are financially sound, operationally feasible.
- Support feasibility assessment, risk evaluation and implementation planning for commercial activities, UK partnership opportunities and international activity.
- Ensure that all opportunity and activity is fully integrated into whole-school planning and governance.

v) Estates

In conjunction with the Director of Estates:

- Develop and maintain the recently agreed, forward-looking Master Plan which supports the strategic vision.
- Ensure the delivery of a planned, robust maintenance programme for all of the School's buildings and grounds to the required standard and compliant with regulations, including health and safety, fire and the Independent Schools Standards.
- Ensure the delivery of capital projects to time, specification, and budget.

vi) IT

In conjunction with the Director of IT:

- Develop and implement an IT strategy which aligns the IT capabilities with the School's strategic vision.
- Oversee the development, procurement, delivery and management of cost-effective IT infrastructure, data and services to support high-quality teaching and learning, communications and administration for all areas of the School's operations.
- Facilitate the safety, security and integrity of the School's IT network and data.

vii) Operational integration and readiness

- Act as the primary point of integration across operational domains, ensuring that finance, estates, commercial activities, systems and people considerations align with strategic priorities.
- Work in close partnership with the Director of Operations to test operational feasibility, readiness and risk.
- Ensure that estates and infrastructure planning supports long-term strategy rather than reactive delivery.

The Person

The successful candidate will bring the following qualifications, skills and knowledge, leadership style and personal attributes.

Qualifications and experience

- Educated to degree level or equivalent.
- A strong track record of successful executive leadership experience in a complex organisation and working with a Board of Trustees or equivalent structure.
- Direct experience at the executive level of both finance strategy and operations.
- A proven capacity to shape the strategic development of an organisation whilst ensuring strategic agility and operational success.
- Experience of leading and managing change in complex organisational settings with demonstrable success in building strong relationships with a range of stakeholders, effectively balancing needs and priorities.
- Proven experience of leading and developing high-performing, multi-disciplinary teams.
- Working within a regulatory framework and experience of governance, compliance and risk management.

Skills and knowledge

- Strong financial literacy with first-class analytical skills and the ability to develop long-term financial plans.
- Demonstrable strategic abilities, organisational and problems solving skills with the capacity to guide whole-organisational development.
- Strong financial and commercial acumen with the ability to easily assimilate, analyse, interpret and present data and assess risk.
- A naturally relational style with well-developed interpersonal skills and high levels of emotional intelligence.
- First-class communication and negotiation skills – able to balance robustness with constructive, positive discussion and diplomacy.
- Well-developed commercial skills with strong entrepreneurial instincts to pursue new opportunities.
- An understanding of the commercial, economic and financial imperatives in the leadership and management of schools.
- An understanding of the School's responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and child protection issues and a clear commitment to delivering best practice in safeguarding.

Leadership and personal attributes

- A highly visible, confident and approachable leader who leads by example and inspires others, working effectively both independently and as part of a multidisciplinary team.
- A collaborative style with the ability to provide constructive challenge.
- Excited by high expectations, creative thinking and achieving ambitious targets.
- Demonstrable energy, drive and the ability to work at pace.
- High levels of integrity, resilience and professional judgement.
- Values and promotes diversity, equality 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 Leave entitlement of 30 days per year plus statutory bank holidays and Christmas shutdown (gifted days between Christmas and New Year).
- Aviva Pension with 8% employer and 4% employee contribution.
- Life assurance of 3 times annual base salary.
- Private Medical Insurance (currently with BUPA).
- Fee discount
- Membership and use of the School's sports facilities including gym, squash, tennis, swimming pool and 9-hole golf course.
- Free lunches during term time.
- Onsite parking.
- Cycle to work scheme.
- Employee assistance scheme.

Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics in the first instance, to arrange a confidential discussion with Nina Lambert, Head of Professional Services Appointments: ninalambert@rsacademics.com.

The deadline for receipt of applications is 10.00am on Monday 21st September 2026.

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 [RSAcademics.com](https://www.rsacademics.com)).
- A covering letter addressed to the Head, Sam Price. 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, 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.



Cranleigh School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all its staff and volunteers to share that commitment. Applicants will be required to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post. The appointment is subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance, including an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, satisfactory references, proof of identity and eligibility to work in the UK, a satisfactory medical report and proof of qualifications.

The School recognises the positive value of diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination. We welcome and encourage job applications from people of all backgrounds. It is the School's policy to employ the best qualified individuals and to provide equal opportunity for the advancement of our team including promotion and training and not to discriminate against any person because of their race, colour, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, religion or religious belief, disability or age.

The Process is as Follows:

- All applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. If you have not received an 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 online with RSAcademics via Microsoft Teams on 24th and 25th September 2026.
- Longlist interviews will take place at the School on Wednesday 7th October 2026.
- Shortlist interviews will take place at the School on Wednesday 14th October 2026.



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. RSAcademics is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in schools.

Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.



How to Find Cranleigh





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