

# CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Candidate Information



St Andrew's Prep  
EASTBOURNE

# CHAIR'S WELCOME

As the first-ever Chair who is not an Old Eastbournian, my motivation for joining the Board was driven by the very positive experiences of our three daughters at both St Andrew's Prep and the College.

The schools have many strengths, as you will read below. In my three decades as a parent and then a Governor, there have, of course, been many changes. However, something that has remained a constant for our two wonderful schools and that has particularly resonated with me over the years is a strong sense of 'belonging' – a feeling shared by all our stakeholders.

The Charity is not alone in encountering the challenges facing the independent sector, but the Executive Team has responded with the greatest foresight and efficiency. I am confident that the measures they have taken to preserve the long-term sustainability of the Charity will endure beyond my tenure, as the new Chair continues to navigate future challenges whilst enjoying being a part of, and 'belonging' to, the vibrant ECi community.

The role of Chair presents an exciting opportunity to work alongside two highly proficient and forward-thinking Headmasters, who are served by experienced leadership teams. Our Governing Body is dynamic and highly skilled and will welcome the leadership of my successor in helping to shape future strategy and to strengthen pathways to success.

## NICKY ECKERT

Chair of Governors





# HEAD'S WELCOME

I look forward to welcoming those interested in the position of Chair to Eastbourne College and St Andrew's Prep school – proud to show them this delightful community and establish a relationship that will be mutually rewarding. The relationship between the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster is possibly the most important bond of trust in a school. Working with three Chairs, I understand that the needs and personalities of the Chair must be individually met, and it is a point of personal pride for me to serve them as assiduously as I can. I work on the principle of 'no surprises', so the Chair remains informed and forewarned of anything that might present challenges well before decisions need to be made or issues are raised at meetings

With the stage that the Charity is at and with the experience among the senior staff, our new Chair will not encounter neediness and a constant requirement to show up to every concert, production or fete. Eastbourne College staff are notably willing to work with and support the strategic direction of Governors and keen to embrace the objectivity and expertise they bring. More than anything else, the new Chair will find a community that is personable and welcoming, with delightful pupils and motivated staff – a family environment that is open-minded and eager to accept refreshed leadership and vision.



**TOM LAWSON**

Headmaster



# ABOUT THE SCHOOLS

The College was established in 1867 “to provide a general education of the highest class in the remarkable healthiness of Eastbourne.” St Andrew’s opened in Meads 10 years later, and both schools strive to live up to these founding principles today.

Eastbourne College is the leading co-educational boarding and day school in East Sussex. Its stunning coastal location is the inspiration for the “endless horizons and endless opportunities” offered to its pupils. Eastbourne has a tradition of innovation, enthusiastically leading UK education in balanced co-education, equally cherishing its boarders and day pupils, and aiming for what the school is proud to call “healthy learning for the long term.” It enjoys an excellent reputation in academics, the arts and sports.

The motto of the school is ‘Ex Oriente Salus’, meaning ‘safety’ or ‘health from the east’.

St Andrew’s Prep is a vibrant and forward-thinking school that blends innovative teaching with the best of traditional prep school values. The school offers a warm, nurturing environment where childhood is cherished and every pupil is supported to develop their individual strengths and character. Its broad curriculum provides strong academic foundations complemented by rich learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom, from sport and outdoor learning to the arts and school trips. Pastoral care and pupil wellbeing sit at the heart of the school’s ethos, as the staff believe that happy, healthy children thrive. St Andrew’s is a community defined by energy, enthusiasm and a deep commitment to the children who are at the centre of all that it does.

Eastbourne College and St Andrew’s Prep amalgamated in 2010, and the overarching organisation is referred to as Eastbourne College Incorporated. They operate as two schools with one Governing Body and a combined support function for which the Chief Operating Officer is responsible.

Both are award-winning schools, holding the Wellbeing Award for Schools from the National Children’s Bureau and Optimus Education, recognising the exceptionally high quality of pastoral care across both schools. The College recently won the national Talk Education Award for Innovation in Education for its inspiring approach to coaching sport at every level. It also holds the highly prestigious Platinum Artsmark by the Arts Council for its outstanding work in creative and performing arts, the only school of its type in the South East to receive this top award, while St Andrew’s was shortlisted for Independent School of the Year in 2024 and 2025 and boasts the EAL Quality Mark Gold Award from the EAL Academy.

Eastbourne College is committed to achieving academic excellence. Public examination results remain strong. The academic year 2024–25 was marked by distinction across every discipline. Pupils earned national prizes, Oxbridge offers and competitive scholarships. The College maintained its academic performance across key metrics at both A Level and GCSE. Year on year, the school is typically ranked in the top 4% of schools in the country based on ‘value-added’ (how much the pupils achieve above and beyond their expected grades).

For a full picture of life at Eastbourne College, please visit the school’s website [here](#) and St Andrew’s [here](#).



St Andrew’s Prep  
EASTBOURNE



*Tradition intertwined with modernity at this forward-thinking all-rounder gem. Hard workers and doers thrive and go into the world as grounded people you’re going to want to be around. As one long-standing parent put it, ‘If I’d have had 20 children, I’d have put them all through Eastbourne!’*



## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Eastbourne College is coming up to its 160th anniversary, having celebrated its 150th anniversary with the completion of an ambitious building programme called Project 150.

The opening of the stunning Winn Building at the heart of the campus completed the second phase of Project 150. The £33m enhancement offers ground-breaking, state-of-the-art facilities, including:

- Academic accommodation: 32 state-of-the-art classrooms fitted with Prowise screens and intelligent heating and lighting systems
- Sports facilities: a cricket pavilion, Sport England-compliant sports hall, FINA certified swimming pool with full Swiss touch-pad timing system, two glass-backed squash courts, fitness suite, multi-purpose dance studio and changing facilities
- A dynamic music, drama and arts centre with an auditorium, recording studio and exhibition space

- Dining facilities: accommodating up to 600 in one sitting, with the kitchens fitted with the very best in modern equipment and a pupil café with full barista service.

St Andrew's Prep is coming up to its 150th anniversary. The Prep School opened its own purpose-built sports hall in September 2016 and has invested heavily in the refurbishment of its pavilion and boarding house.

With VAT now fully embedded within the sector and further clarity over likely pupil roll moving forwards, the Board are turning their attention to Vision 2027, which will form the new strategic plan from September 2027. Much of the 2023–2028 strategic plan (available on request) remains valid, but the new tax policies under the Labour government have fundamentally shifted the financial backdrop. While much has already been done to strengthen links and unity between the two schools, efforts continue to explore and maximise opportunities for new and exciting ways of utilising the resources at the Charity's disposal to further improve the experience for all and ensure that the schools continue to fit the changing needs of pupils in the 21st century.



# THE OPPORTUNITY

Nicky Eckert, the current Chair of Governors, plans to step down in July 2027, so our aim is to appoint the new Chair in time to join the Board in September 2026, a year before taking over the reins.

The Governors are seeking someone who either has or can develop a real commitment to the Charity and to the education and development of its pupils across our two schools. The role of Chair of Governors is both stimulating and challenging. The Chair leads and sets the tone for the Governing Body, its role and its interactions with the schools' leadership and staff, and its reputation in the region. This is a tremendous opportunity for a new Chair of Governors at Eastbourne to:

- Shape the future of the region's leading independent, co-educational schools and strengthen their already excellent position in the region's educational landscape
- Develop governance and leadership skills in a dynamic educational environment
- Make a lasting impact on pupils, staff and the broader Charity community.

Though the role is voluntary, non-executive and pro-bono, it requires someone with the time to provide engaged oversight of the strategic development of the schools and the skills to provide support and challenge the Headmasters and the COO. The new Chair of Governors will assume the role at a time of unprecedented economic, political and societal challenge for the independent schools sector. Therefore, they will need to be robust, rigorous and resourceful.

Current members of the Board have differing backgrounds spanning commerce, education and other professions. The new Chair will have the opportunity to strengthen and develop this team, using their experience and people management skills to ensure that the Board acts purposefully and collectively.

In summary, this is a wonderful opportunity for someone with the time and skills to lead the Board with wisdom and gravitas and to provide insightful and empathetic eyes-on, hands-off support and guidance to the schools' senior leaders.





## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

Eastbourne College Incorporated is constituted as a company limited by guarantee and is registered with the Charity Commission. It is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association dating from incorporation on 22 April 1911 and last amended on 7 March 2024. The Charity consists of two schools, Eastbourne College and St Andrew's Prep, with a wholly owned trading subsidiary, Eastbourne College Enterprises Limited, the activities of which are to provide bussing services, sports and letting facilities and school shop facilities to the schools, generating an alternative income stream to support the Charity's core objectives.

The Governors serve both as directors and trustees of the Charity. As a Board, they are responsible for the overall strategy of the Charity, and they have statutory responsibility for key aspects of compliance, including safeguarding and health and safety. To fulfil these responsibilities, they delegate day-to-day management to the two Headmasters and their senior management teams. They seek to ensure, for

all who have an interest in the Charity, the maintenance of the distinctive ethos of both schools and the delivery of its charitable objects for today's pupils.

The Charity has an honorary President, together with four honorary Vice-Presidents, who fulfil a goodwill ambassadorial role for the Charity but do not serve as directors. The current Board comprises the Chair, the Vice-Chair and 15 other Governors, all of whom are deeply committed to the schools' continuing success. Some are parents of current pupils, and some are former pupils themselves. All are regular visitors to the schools, meeting staff and pupils. Profiles of the current Board can be found [here](#).

Governors are appointed by the Board following nominations received from the Nominations and Governance Committee, which regularly considers the range of skills, experience and diversity required by the Board and the Board's performance. New Governors are inducted fully into the workings of the Charity, and they receive appropriate training on child protection and safeguarding, along with other internal and external training as required.

Governance is conducted through the operation of the Board and appropriate Committees, the principal ones being:

- Education and Pastoral Committee
- Remuneration Committee
- Finance and Property Committee

- Investment Committee
- Nominations and Governance Committee
- Foundation and Development Committee

In addition, specific Governors hold oversight and liaison roles, for example, in relation to safeguarding, early career teachers, SEND and health and safety. There is also Governor representation on the teaching staff liaison committees, which meet termly at each school, with the intention of furthering good relationships between the Governors, senior management and staff through the sharing of ideas and information.

The Board is supported in its day-to-day activities by the Clerk to the Board of Governors.

The Headmasters, Second Master at the College and Deputy Head of St Andrew's Prep, together with the Chief Operating Officer, attend all termly meetings of the Board and relevant Committees.

The Board's policy is implemented via the Headmasters and the Chief Operating Officer. Each school operates with its own senior management team, led by the relevant Headmaster. The Headmaster of St Andrew's Prep School and the Chief Operating Officer report into the Headmaster at the College. The Chief Operating Officer manages all support staff, many of whom work across the Charity, supporting both schools.



# AFFILIATIONS & RELATIONSHIPS

The Charity actively supports promotion of the highest standards in the independent schools sector through networking with other major schools and through membership of various associations which support the sector, including the ISC, the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA), the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS), and the Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA). The Headmaster of the College is a member of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC). The Headmaster of St Andrew's Prep is a member of the Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS).

The Charity has developed links with a wide range of charities and organisations, both local and national, in its efforts to optimise the educational use of its sporting and cultural facilities and to provide its pupils with an awareness of the social context of the all-round education that is provided at both schools. The Charity supports the local community where possible and puts its facilities to good use as a public benefit, in particular with its sector-leading independent-state school partnership, the **Coastal Schools Partnership (CSP)**. The Charity has a long-standing partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association, sharing its facilities and providing the ball crew for the Rothesay International Tennis Tournament at Devonshire Park.

The Charity also benefits from the generosity of the Eastbournian Society, a thriving network of Old Eastbournians, Old Androvians, Old Aschamians, Friends of St Andrew's Prep, Eastbourne College Parent Connect, current and former parents and staff, and other friends and supporters of the College, whose close support is greatly appreciated and gladly acknowledged.





## FINANCES & ESTATE

The Charity's finances are managed by the Chief Operating Officer and a team of experienced finance professionals. The consolidated group has a healthy turnover and has significant financial resources.

The Charity has a sizeable estate, spanning over 50 acres in Eastbourne, with a further 50 acres of land further afield, some of which is used to support co-curricular activities. The balance sheet of the Charity includes around £47m of buildings used by the schools. These are conservatively valued at a depreciated historic cost, the current value of the total estate being much greater. The balance sheet also includes about £10m of investments in endowed or restricted funds that support scholarships and bursaries, and a further £3.5m of investment property, which generates an additional revenue stream for the Charity.

The Charity borrowed £10m in 2017, secured by a debenture over the Charity's assets, to support the

Project 150 development. The current loan balance is £8m. The Charity made an operating surplus of £1.8m in the year to 31st August 2025, slightly ahead of target and comfortably above that required by the bank covenant. As a charitable company, all funds are used to support the education provided at the College and St Andrew's Prep.

The Charity takes every opportunity to maximise use of its outstanding facilities to generate commercial income with a significant lettings programme during the Easter and Summer holidays.

The Charity operates a means-tested bursary scheme remitting up to 100% of fees for able young people who would not otherwise be able to attend the two schools. Currently, 140 pupils across the two schools benefit from help with their fees through means-tested bursaries amounting to just over £2m.

The Governors are committed, insofar as resources allow, to continuing to support those pupils for whom an education within the Charity would otherwise be unaffordable. Efforts continue to build an endowment to support the provision of means-tested bursaries, with the target of raising the endowment to £30m to fund the equivalent of 40 fully funded means-tested bursary places at any one time.



# ROLE DESCRIPTION

This job description outlines the key roles and responsibilities of the Chair of the Board of Governors.

## CHAIR'S ROLE AND APPOINTMENT

- The Chair's role is to provide leadership to the Board of Governors (the Board), ECI and its Schools (Eastbourne College and St Andrew's Prep), and to ensure that the Governors fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the proper governance of the schools. Note that responsibility for ensuring that the Executive Teams maintain high standards in safeguarding is central to the role.
- In accordance with ECI's Articles of Association (Article 14), the Board must elect one of their number to be the Chair of their meetings. The Chair is subject to annual re-election and can be removed by the Board at any time. On appointment, it is expected that the office of Chair shall last for an initial period of three years and for a maximum term of nine years. The person occupying the role of Chair of the Board is reported to the Secretary of State as the Chair.

## DELEGATED CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair shall lead the Governing Body in its responsibilities to:

- secure the long-term future of ECI (Viability Responsibilities);
- ensure the highest possible standards of governance (Governance Responsibilities);
- ensure the proper and efficient conduct of meetings of the Board (Board Conduct Responsibilities); and
- support and, where appropriate, challenge the Heads on behalf of and as agreed by the full Board (Head Responsibilities).

## CHAIR'S AUTHORITY

- Where an urgent decision is required between scheduled meetings of the Board, the Chair shall contact as many of the Governors as possible in the circumstances and, subject to the agreement of a majority of those Governors who can be contacted, shall take the necessary action in accordance with the articles. In such situations, the Chair should make every effort to contact the Vice-Chair and the Chair of any relevant committee.
- Any action taken shall be included on the agenda for the next Board meeting for reporting and recording in the minutes.

## LIMITATIONS ON AUTHORITY

The Chair must:

- act within any guidelines set down by the Board;
- work constructively with the Head and avoid becoming involved in day-to-day management unless specifically directed by the Board; and
- not prevent any proposal by a Governor, Committee or Head from being considered by the Board or direct the Board's decision-making process towards any one outcome.

## VIABILITY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair shall ensure that:

- the Board sets the mission, vision, strategy, and high-level policies for ECI within the powers and restrictions of the articles;
- the Board takes steps to monitor the schools' performance and risks and that the schools satisfy all regulatory and legal compliance requirements;
- ECI and its schools have satisfactory internal systems and controls for all financial and non-financial matters, which are audited and reviewed regularly; and
- the key relationship of the Chair, Head and COO works effectively.





## GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair shall ensure that:

- ECI has an appropriate governance structure and that this structure, the articles, and the Board's performance are reviewed regularly;
- the Board delegates sufficient authority in writing to its committees, the Chair, the Head, and others to enable ECI and its schools to carry on its business effectively between Board meetings;
- the Board has the necessary skills to govern ECI and its schools effectively and has access to relevant external professional advice and expertise;
- there is a systematic, open, and fair procedure for the recruitment of Governors, committee members, future Chairs and Heads and that all such appointees receive appropriate induction, advice, information, and training (both individual and collective);
- the Governing Body proactively considers succession planning to ensure that the necessary skills, experience, diversity, and expertise are always available to it; and
- the Governors act reasonably, in line with best practices as prescribed by the Charity Commission and other guidance and ECI's own policies, including in the handling of complaints, and in the interests of ECI and its schools and in accordance with the Governors' Code of Conduct.

## BOARD CONDUCT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair shall advance the proper and efficient conduct of Board meetings by ensuring that:

- Board meetings are chaired effectively to include seeking consensus, balancing the need for full debate on key questions with the need to reach clear and agreed decisions;
- there is an annual programme of Board and Committee meetings and that agendas and supporting papers are well structured, meaningful and contain relevant, timely and accurate information to allow the Board to discharge its responsibilities;
- Board decisions are made and implemented in the best, long-term interests of ECI and its schools and that the Board takes collective ownership of these decisions; and
- the Board sets aside time each year to reflect on its effectiveness in the delivery of ECI's charitable objects and that ECI continues to deliver public benefit.

## HEAD RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair shall support the Heads by:

- ensuring that the Board focuses on its governance role and does not slip incrementally, or otherwise, into a management role;
- ensuring the Heads are appropriately performance appraised, have the opportunity for professional development and have access to appropriate external professional support;

- arranging regular, but not over-frequent, meetings with the Heads and developing a professional relationship within which each can speak openly about concerns and challenges;
- monitoring their performance, always remembering that the Heads are responsible to the Board as a whole and not to any one individual Governor or sub-group of Governors; and
- agreeing respective roles to represent ECI and its Schools and act as spokesperson.

The Chair shall hold the Heads accountable by:

- challenging the Heads constructively, only in the best interests of ECI and its schools and as a 'critical friend' as agreed by the full Board;
- ensuring that the Heads understand the key performance indicators by which they will be held accountable; and
- ensuring that there are appropriate mechanisms, both internal and external, to verify that the Board receives a balanced and honest picture of the performance of ECI and its schools.

## OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair should be prepared to represent ECI and its schools as appropriate, including speaking at Speech Days and Eastbournian Society events and conducting media interviews if required. The Chair should agree with the Heads a regular programme of visits to enable the role to be undertaken as described above.

# PERSON SPECIFICATION

The Chair of Governors at Eastbourne will be a dynamic and strategic leader with strong commercial skills alongside a commitment to providing outstanding education. It is expected that the next Chair will embody and personify the schools' core values of Pursuit of Excellence, Integrity, Participation and Kindness.

## DESIRABLE QUALITIES

- A strategic approach, working with the Board and senior leaders such that the Charity delivers against its strategic and operational plans
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to foster a caring and collaborative approach with a lightness of touch and a sense of humour

- Strong leadership experience with experience of successfully and effectively chairing boards and committees
- The skills to provide both support and challenge to the Heads and our COO
- An awareness of the political and economic challenges of the education sector and especially the independent education sector
- A track record of excellent judgement, unquestionable integrity and objective thinking, even when under pressure
- Strong business acumen and financial understanding
- Resilience, focus, collegiality and diplomacy
- Attention to detail
- An ability to evaluate risks
- The vision to bring fresh ideas to the table
- Commitment to safeguarding and regulatory compliance requirements
- Easily accessible and contactable, and quick to respond, ideally living within a two-hour radius of Eastbourne.







# APPLICATION PROCESS

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.

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

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](http://www.rsacademics.com) for more information.