



Group Director of Governance and Compliance

Candidate Information

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the role of Group Director of Governance and Compliance at St Dunstan's Education Group (SDEG). This is an exceptional moment to join a modern, values-driven educational charity that is redefining what a high-performing, not-for-profit schools group can be.

SDEG has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. We have moved from being a single-school foundation to a confident Group of high-performing independent schools with a clear identity and a strategic ambition to be recognised nationally as a modern, socially purposeful and commercially sustainable model for independent education. The Group is enriched through the diversity of a south-east London heritage and setting. Today, we educate more than 2,000 children from early years through to sixth form. Each school has its own character, but we are all united by a commitment to delivering *Excellence. Differently*.

Our performance reflects this ambition. St Dunstan's Senior School is now firmly established as one of the top-50-performing independent schools in the UK, with a clear trajectory towards the top 25. Recent inspections identified four Significant Strengths in our schools, a rare achievement that speaks to the strength of our educational culture, pastoral care and curriculum ambition. We have also received multiple national awards for innovation, including sport, fundraising and community impact, reinforcing our position as a sector-leading organisation.

At a time when the independent sector is shifting rapidly, SDEG has strong demand for places; staff turnover is low, and major estate, digital and organisational projects

are progressing at pace. Commercial diversification will play an important role in our next phase of development. We are now focused on embedding the systems and culture of our Group, clarifying and ensuring that our professional services operate at the scale and depth required of an organisation with our ambition. As part of this work, we recently commissioned an external review of our governance arrangements to ensure they reflected our philosophy of *Excellence. Differently*. Governance sets the tone and culture across an organisation, and good governance ensures it is robust, sustainable and does not allow potential crises to fall under the radar. Governance is how we hold ourselves accountable to laws and regulations; it is how the strategic plan is developed, and it is critical to get it right.

Recognising the central importance of governance to our growth plans, we have created a new Director-level role to provide strategic leadership of governance: the Group Director of Governance and Compliance. Reporting to the CEO, this is an exciting opportunity for an exceptional individual to lead the governance, compliance and risk management aspects of the Group. This is a pivotal leadership role which will be key to the continued success of SDEG. As a key member of the SDEG Professional Services Leadership Team, this strategic role will be responsible for delivering a governance framework that oversees compliance, risk management and quality, Group-wide and across all schools.

If you are energised by ambition and sustainable growth and motivated by purpose and challenge, then I warmly encourage you to apply. I hope you will find in SDEG a community that is forward thinking, collaborative, and genuinely committed to making a meaningful difference.

Nick Hewlett

Chief Executive Officer, St Dunstan's Education Group





St Dunstan's Education Group

Excellence. Differently

St Dunstan's Education Group is one of the fastest-growing not-for-profit independent school groups in the UK. It comprises a dynamic family of schools in south London, united by a shared ethos of integrity, curiosity, and community and by a bold vision for modern, future-focused education. At the heart of the Group is St Dunstan's College, a thriving co-educational day school for pupils aged 3-18, encompassing both the Junior and Senior Schools. The Group also includes three highly regarded prep schools whose distinct identities enrich the collective offer:

- **West Lodge School, Sidcup** – will be joining the Group in September 2026
- **Rosemead Preparatory School, Dulwich** – joined the Group in 2024
- **St Christopher's The Hall, Beckenham** – joined the Group in 2025

Each school retains its own character and traditions, yet all are bound by a common purpose: to nurture confident, compassionate young people who think boldly and contribute meaningfully to the world.

SDEG's defining philosophy – *Excellence. Differently* – is a commitment to reimagining what excellence in education looks like. It encompasses sector-leading pupil progress, outstanding public examination results, national recognition in sport, music and drama, and award-winning approaches to wellbeing, inclusion, and curriculum reform. It also reflects the Group's belief that excellence must extend beyond the classroom to the way it supports families, serves communities, and invests in its staff.

The Group's south London footprint provides a rich cultural context that informs its practice and strengthens its identity. Diversity of background and perspective fuels creativity and innovation across the schools, shaping an educational experience that is distinctive, inclusive, and deeply human.

SDEG is a Group with momentum – expanding thoughtfully, investing strategically, and shaping a future-facing education that reflects the world its pupils will lead. *Excellence. Differently* is both its guiding philosophy and its promise for the future.

Our Schools and Activities

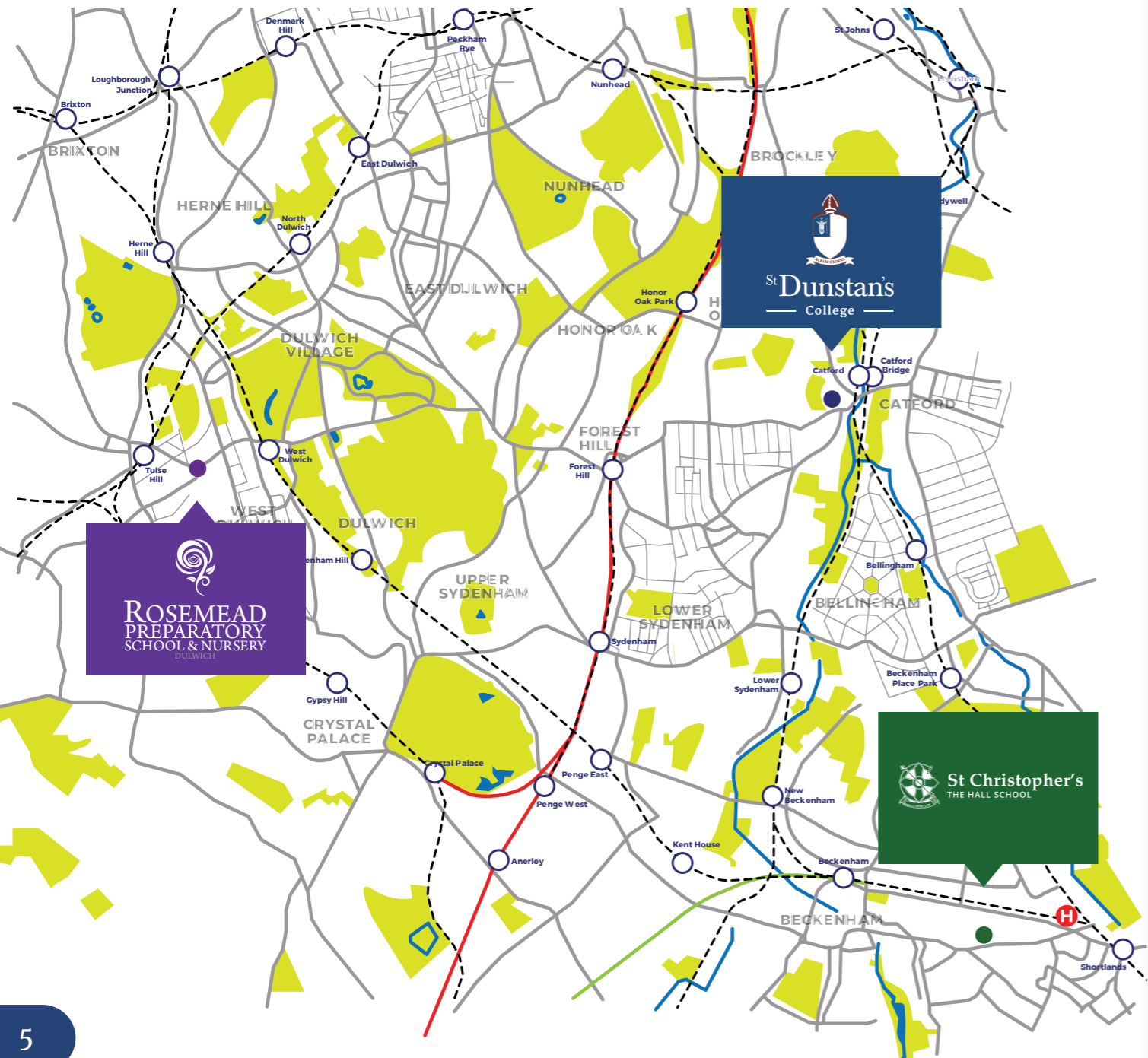
St Dunstan's Education Group is a dynamic and growing community of schools in south-east London, united by a bold vision for modern independent education. The Group currently operates across four schools and six sites and, from September 2026, will be adding a fifth school to the Group, bringing the total number of children educated close to 2,000.

Together, our schools form a collaborative, mission-driven Group that celebrates individuality, champions educational innovation, and places wellbeing at the heart of educational excellence. Each retains its own character and traditions, yet all are bound

by a common purpose: to nurture confident, compassionate young people who think boldly and contribute meaningfully to the world.

In recent years, we have invested heavily in an estate that matches our approach to education and our ambitions for the future – at St Dunstan's College, a new Junior School, a STEM Centre for Excellence and Innovation, a dedicated Sixth Form Centre, and a state-of-the-art Performing Arts Theatre have all been built in recent times, with a new recreational hub ('The Plaza') currently under construction and plans to begin the build of a new Sport and Leisure Centre in the very near future. Alongside this, our 21-acre Jubilee Grounds have been transformed into a hub for sport and community engagement, underpinning our groundbreaking gender-neutral sports programme, our unique partnership with Chelsea FC, and our extensive outreach across Lewisham.





At Rosemead, we are in the process of rolling out a site consolidation and improvement process, as well as working with architects to design an incredibly exciting future for that school. St Christopher's The Hall underwent a complete renewal of its outdoor education spaces last summer and, this summer, begins a significant project to reimagine the link between its heritage and modern spaces.

Underpinning and working alongside the work of our schools are other income streams. St Dunstan's Education Group Enterprises works across all our sites to ensure that we maximise revenue in times when they are not in use for school activity. We are in the process of beginning St Dunstan's International to support future international franchising projects and St Dunstan's Nurseries, a 52-week nursery offer for parents at the beginning of their journey with us. St Dunstan's Education Group has one of the fastest-growing development offices in the country. Begun only 5 years ago, it has since raised over £2m, established an endowment fund, and now generates £800k a year, with ambitions to raise £10m by 2035.





Governance

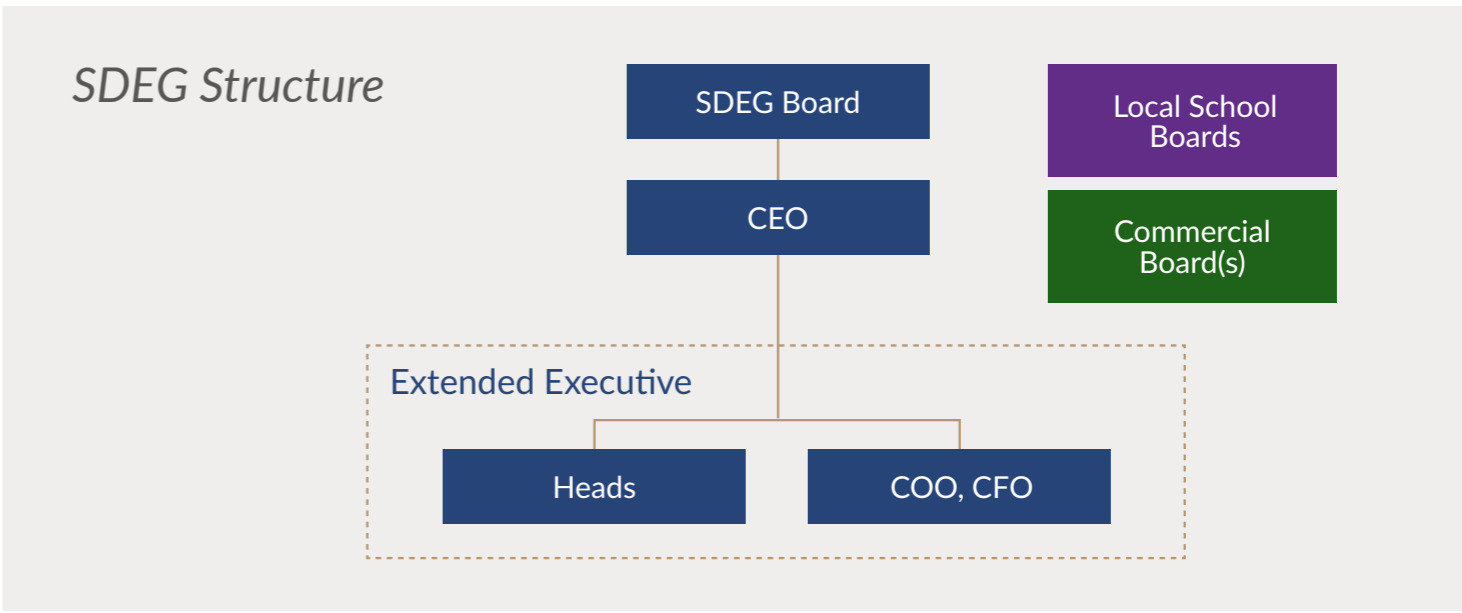
Strong governance is one of the key strands to any successful organisation, and as part of our focus on growth and development, we recently commissioned an independent review of our governance structures. We wanted to ensure that our governance framework reflected our growth plans and philosophy of *Excellence. Differently.*

Following the review of governance, we have moved from a traditional Board of Governors with committees and termly meetings to a smaller, more agile Board, which will meet more frequently and be strategically focused. Agendas are derived from an annual agenda plan with key documents driving deliberations, including the Group strategic operating plan and the Group risk register. The CEO, CFO and COO attend all meetings with the Extended Executive and Directors, also in

attendance at meetings as relevant. All Directors and Executive members attend and contribute to the annual strategy day.

Each school will have its own Local School Board (LSB). LSBs will meet termly. These are small, committed groups, charged with a critical friendship role for Heads and oversight and monitoring of the school leadership in terms of educational outcomes, the curriculum, pastoral issues and safeguarding, marketing, admissions and local partnerships. LSBs have an independent Chair and a link Governor from the Board. Agendas derive from an annual agenda plan with a focus on key documents, including the school development plan and the school risk register. Heads and their SLTs attend the LSB meetings. The CEO is a member of all LSBs. The Nurseries and Enterprise Boards will meet quarterly; the International Board will meet annually.

The governance structure is set out below.





The Opportunity

Reporting to the CEO, this is a senior, strategic role with responsibility for ensuring that governance across the Group is robust, compliant, effective and continuously improving. You will provide expert support to the Group Board, LSBs and subsidiary Boards, including nursery, trading and international entities, ensuring governance frameworks facilitate strong strategic oversight and drive organisational effectiveness and that high standards of governance, accountability, transparency and integrity are maintained.

The Director of Governance and Compliance will be responsible for ensuring that SDEG operates within all legal, regulatory and ethical frameworks applicable to the independent education sector. The role will provide strategic leadership on governance, governance policy development, risk management, and compliance with the Independent School Standards and Regulations (ISSRs) and related legal requirements.

Working closely with the Group Chair, CEO, COO, CFO and Heads of Schools, you will act as a trusted advisor on governance best practice while also leading the delivery of efficient, high-quality governance processes and administration. The work will reflect the schools' autonomy whilst driving consistent quality at the Group level. Working

closely with the St Dunstan's Executive Team and as a member of the Professional Services Leadership Team, this role carries full accountability for all governance activity across the Group.

A key focus in the first year will be to embed and operationalise the Group's recently updated governance structure, ensuring it functions smoothly, delivers its intended strategic outcomes and becomes fully integrated into the Group's decision-making processes. Success in this role will partly be measured by the effective adoption of the new governance frameworks, clear evidence of Boards operating efficiently and strategically, and strengthened governance practices across all Group entities.

This is a unique opportunity to shape governance in a growing, high-performing educational Group, influencing decision-making at the most senior levels and supporting the long-term success of the Group. The post will attract either an experienced legal, financial and/or compliance professional or an outstanding individual from the charity, corporate or education sector. The successful candidate will need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of best practice in governance, compliance and risk management, as well as commercial acumen and dynamism.



Job Description

Governance

- Provide strategic leadership on governance across all Group entities
- Ensure the effectiveness of new governance structures, including Local School Boards and trading subsidiary Boards, assuring effective reporting and documentation and supporting strong decision-making
- Advise the Group Board and LSBs on best practice in governance
- Review and develop Group governance policies and ensure alignment with current legislation and sector standards, e.g. Code of Conduct, Conflicts of Interest, Terms of Reference, Schemes of Delegation
- Lead Annual Board evaluations, assessing the composition, culture and strategic impact of the Group Board and LSBs, and identify areas for improvement
- Develop an effective and robust training programme for Board members and develop clear criteria to evaluate Director/Head contributions at Board meetings
- Design and maintain annual governance calendars, ensuring coherence across the Boards and strategically focused meetings which prioritise key issues and risks
- Oversee consistent management of governance records and processes across the Group
- Oversee and coordinate complaints and appeals escalated to Board level, ensuring processes are robust, compliant and well-documented

- Use technology in innovative ways to streamline Board papers and improve focus and effectiveness

(There will be administrative support for routine aspects, such as drafting agendas, distributing agendas and papers, minute-taking, etc.)

Compliance and Regulatory Oversight

- Monitor and oversee national, educational regulatory developments with a strong focus on school inspection requirements
- Establish and manage an effective policy review cycle, communicating updates and changes to policies and ensuring timely review and approval
- Maintain inspection evidence of compliance at Group level and advise schools on record-keeping that demonstrates compliance, helping to ensure that schools are inspection-ready
- Ensure compliance with company and charity law across all Group entities, including adherence to statutory and company secretariat requirements, and the accurate maintenance of statutory registers and filing
- Ensure schools' compliance with the Independent School Standards and Regulations and all other regulatory matters, recognising that individual schools hold responsibility for operational implementation
- Develop an SDEG compliance framework based on the ISSRs for senior staff and Board members to assess outcomes at school level
- Oversee safeguarding policy and practice at school level, recognising that school DSLs will have operational responsibility; support schools in the production of annual safeguarding reports to the LSBs, and produce an overarching annual report to the Group Board

- Carry out periodic checks of the Single Central Register of staff appointments and, working closely with the People Operations Team, ensure safer recruitment practices
- Facilitate dialogue and knowledge-sharing across schools on compliance topics

Risk Management

- Review the Group risk management framework to ensure that strategic, operational, financial, regulatory, safeguarding, health and safety, cyber and reputational risks are identified, assessed, mitigated and monitored effectively across all schools and at Group level
- Provide expert guidance to the Group Executive Team on risk exposure and help ensure compliance, resilience and informed decision-making
- Promote a proactive, positive risk culture across the Group
- Oversee risk registers at Group level and provide advice and training to schools on implementing effective controls, risk management plans and risk registers
- Support schools in becoming risk-aware and conduct risk assessments, scenario analysis and stress-testing at Group level
- Lead the Group's incident response and escalation framework, supporting business continuity and crisis management
- Ensure lessons learnt are carried out on any serious incidents, including near misses, and that lessons learnt are embedded into future controls





Safeguarding and Child Protection

St Dunstan's Education Group is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Applicants will be required to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post. As this role involves regulated activity with children, the successful applicant will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure application. Employment will be conditional upon SDEG being satisfied with the result of the enhanced DBS check and the outcome of all other checks.

St Dunstan's Education Group will also carry out a check of the Children's Barred List on the successful applicant. Applicants should be aware that it is unlawful for St Dunstan's Education Group to employ anyone to work with children if they are barred from doing so, and it is a criminal offence for a person to apply to work with children if they are barred from doing so.

This role is also exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and SDEG is therefore permitted to ask shortlisted applicants to declare all convictions and cautions (including those which are 'spent' unless they are 'protected' under the DBS filtering rules) in order to assess their suitability to work with children.

The safeguarding children and child protection policy can be found [here](#).

No job description can fully cover all aspects of such an appointment, and therefore, the successful person must be flexible and willing to take on other reasonable responsibilities and tasks in order to fulfil the role.



The Person

The successful candidate will provide strategic leadership for governance, compliance and risk management. Plans for the future of SDEG are ambitious, distinctive and exciting. The Director of Governance and Compliance will have a high profile across the Group and will carry significant responsibilities. They will thrive on the opportunity to implement a new governance framework and to monitor its effectiveness. They will have confidence and presence and be willing to challenge others but also demonstrate flexibility and diplomacy in order to successfully engage staff and others in the delivery of the aims of the Group.

Qualifications

- Degree or equivalent professional qualification
- Evidence of and a commitment to continuing professional development
- Professional qualification in governance, risk management, audit or compliance is desirable but not essential

Skills and Experience

- Demonstrable success in and significant experience of working at a strategic level in governance, compliance and/or risk management within an education, charity or legal setting, including working with Boards or governing bodies
- An understanding of relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks and their practical implications for schools and policies
- Excellent organisational and analytical skills

- Exceptional interpersonal, communication, and presentation skills, with the ability to influence and inspire confidence at all levels
- Ability to interpret complex regulations and translate them into practical guidance
- Strategic thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Ability to manage multiple priorities effectively and to work at pace
- Meticulous attention to detail and accuracy, combined with a strategic perspective
- Prior professional experience in an educational setting, whilst helpful, is not essential

Personal Attributes

- Confident in managing upwards and able to challenge others with credibility, diplomacy and tact, understanding how to bring out the best in others
- Integrity and ethical leadership with a commitment to SDEG's aims, ethos and values
- High professional standards combined with motivation, initiative and drive
- Committed team player with strong communication, influencing and collaborative skills
- High levels of discretion and integrity, particularly in handling sensitive or confidential matters
- Forward-looking and intellectually curious
- Committed to best practices in safeguarding in a school setting
- Values and promotes diversity, equality and inclusion
- Proactive, self-motivated and resilient





Appointment Terms

A highly attractive remuneration package is offered, reflecting the significance and seniority of the position. This is a full-time, 52-week post, and some flexibility in working hours will be required in light of the role and responsibilities it entails.

The Group also offers a very generous benefits package, including membership of a defined contribution pension scheme and fee remission.

Other benefits include:

- Private health care insurance (50% paid by employer) with reduced health club membership
- Health care cash plan
- Free lunch and beverages during term time
- Free off-road parking
- Salary sacrifice schemes
- Season ticket loan
- Use of College leisure facilities, including gym, tennis courts and pool
- Workplace Nursery School





Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics in the first instance to arrange a confidential discussion with:

- Peter Lockhart, Search Consultant: peterlockhart@rsacademics.com
- Nina Lambert, Head of Professional Services Appointments: ninalambert@rsacademics.com

Closing date: 10.00am UK time on Tuesday 26th May 2026.

Applications should be made electronically to RSAcademics. To submit your application, please upload your documents according to the instructions provided on the RSAcademics **website**.

You should submit the following (both in PDF format):

- A completed application form (available alongside this candidate information on the RSAcademics **website**)
- A covering letter addressed to the CEO, Mr Nicholas Hewlett. Your 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): applications@rsacademics.com / +44 (0) 204 6269 791

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
- Preliminary interviews will take place with RSAcademics via Teams on Tuesday 2nd and Wednesday 3rd June 2026
- Longlist interviews will take place at St Dunstan's on Monday 22nd June 2026
- Shortlist interviews will be held at St Dunstan's on Wednesday 1st July 2026

St Dunstan's Education Group is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of our community and encourages applications from all suitably qualified candidates.

The appointment is subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance, including an enhanced DBS check, satisfactory references, proof of identity and qualifications, and a satisfactory medical report.

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.



St Dunstan's
EDUCATION
GROUP



Excellence. Differently.

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