



KING EDWARD VI
SCHOOL

Head

Candidate Information

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the opportunity to become Head of King Edward VI School, Southampton.

We are a school with a clear vision and a strong identity. We are proud of what we achieve – academically and beyond – but most of all of the young people who leave us: intellectually curious, capable and ready to contribute positively.

This appointment comes at a pivotal moment for us as we bring our three schools together within the KES Group, supported by a structure that enables both strategic direction and organisational agility while balancing ambition with long-term sustainability. The Head of King Edward VI Senior School will play a central role in shaping how this works in practice given the prominence of the School within the Group structure – leading the Senior School with clarity while contributing to the wider direction of the Group.

We are seeking a Head who will bring energy, purpose and reflective leadership to the role: an accomplished leader with a strong track record, a clear understanding of what distinguishes an excellent school, and the ambition and humility to grow while shaping the School's next chapter.

Our Senior School Head will be the visible and approachable figurehead in the life of the School: someone who relishes learning, enjoys working with young people and values strong relationships

with all members of the school community. Equally, they will be comfortable operating at a strategic level, contributing very significantly to the development of the Group and engaging positively with Governors.

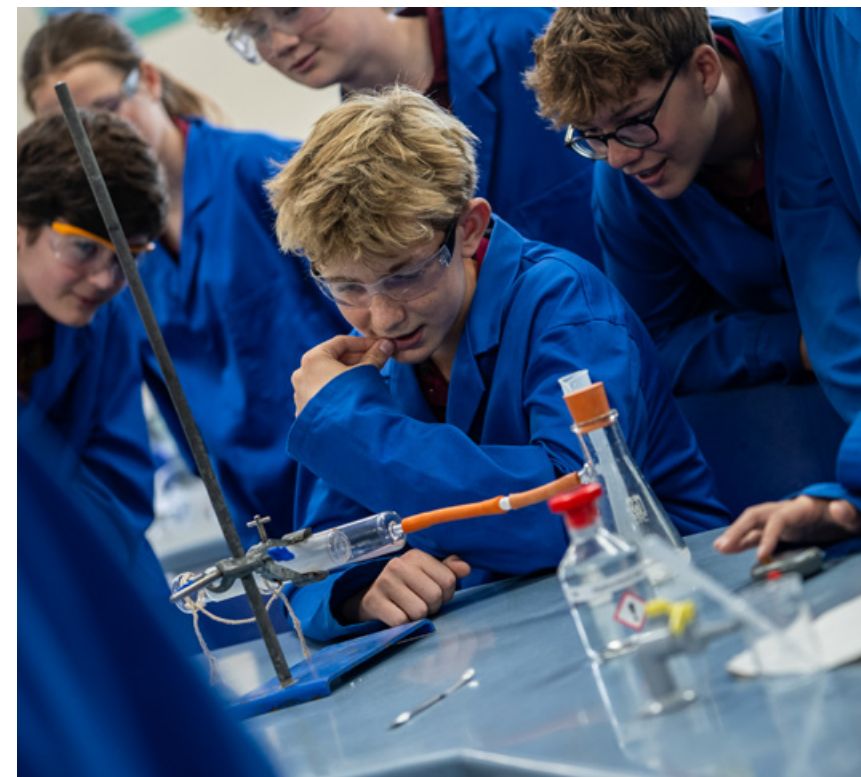
KES Group is a warm and inclusive community shaped by shared values and our strong sense of responsibility to one another. We are looking for a Head of Senior School who will embody that spirit and help it to continue to flourish.

If this opportunity resonates with you, we would be delighted to hear from you.

I look forward to meeting you.

Geraint Davies

Chair of Governors



Introduction

Founded in 1553, King Edward VI School is the oldest independent school in Southampton. The School has a strong reputation for academic excellence, breadth of opportunity and a deeply embedded commitment to the development of young people in all dimensions of their lives. Approaching its 500th anniversary, the School stands at a remarkable point in its history: proud of nearly five centuries of educational excellence yet firmly focused on the future.

Today, King Edward VI School is recognised as one of the leading independent schools in the South. Ranked amongst the Sunday Times Top 10 schools in the South West, recognised as a finalist in the Independent School of the Year Awards 2025 and commended by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) with a rare significant strength for the highly developed social responsibility of its pupils, the School combines exceptional academic outcomes with a culture that values character, kindness and ambition in equal measure.

The School forms part of the KES Group, one of the leading independent school groups in the South of England, comprising King Edward VI School (for pupils aged 11–18), King Edward VI Preparatory School and Nursery (2–11), and Prince's Mead School and Nursery (2–11). Together, the Group educates approximately 1,400 pupils across three sites, with a combined turnover of £29m (net

exc. VAT). It has undergone significant strategic development in recent years, including expansion, integration and the creation of a group leadership structure.

At KES, the purpose is to equip everyone in the school community to lead fulfilling, purposeful and multifaceted lives, now and into their boundless futures. This ambition is underpinned by shared values: *Do the Right Thing, Lift Others and Keep Growing*. These values guide both our culture and decision-making.

The Governors now seek to appoint a new Head of King Edward VI School at a particularly significant moment in the School's and the Group's development. From September 2027, the Group will operate a revised leadership model, with an Executive Principal holding overall strategic responsibility and Heads of each school leading their own institutions with clarity and autonomy.

This appointment offers both continuity and possibility: the chance to lead a highly successful senior school while helping to shape the direction of an ambitious and evolving educational group. It is an exceptional opportunity to build upon an outstanding legacy, to lead one of the country's great schools into its next chapter and to help shape the future of the KES Group as it approaches the School's 500th anniversary.



The School

King Edward VI School is academically ambitious, values-led and committed to developing young people who are curious, confident and ready to make a positive contribution to the world. Academic excellence is complemented by a rich co-curricular programme and strong pastoral care. At the heart of King Edward VI School is our i3 learning philosophy. By fostering Inquisitive Learning, nurturing Intrinsic Motivation and developing Independent Minds, i3 shapes our curriculum, our teaching and the way pupils experience school life. It reflects our belief that academic excellence is achieved not simply through knowledge but through curiosity, independence and a lifelong love of learning.

This philosophy is evident throughout the School. Our STEM programme extends learning beyond the classroom through partnerships with universities, researchers and leading employers, connecting pupils with real-world innovation and inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers and medics. Across more than 100 clubs and societies, alongside a vibrant programme of music, drama, dance, art and humanities, pupils are encouraged to discover new interests, develop their talents and broaden their perspectives.

Sport is equally central to life at King Edward VI School. Built upon a philosophy of participation

and performance, our programme combines exceptional opportunities for all with pathways for high-performing athletes. Almost 70% of pupils represent the School in competitive sport, with more than 700 fixtures played annually, supported by outstanding facilities, including our impressive 33-acre Wellington Sports Ground and a Talented Athlete Programme spanning 21 sporting disciplines.

Underpinning everything is an exceptional pastoral culture. Awarded a finalist for Outstanding Pastoral Care in the Muddy Stiletto Awards, KES offers a bespoke wellbeing curriculum, dedicated Wellbeing Centre and peer mentoring programme. Every pupil is known, supported and challenged to achieve their potential, creating a community in which young people grow with confidence, resilience and purpose.

Relationships are at the heart of King Edward VI School. Ours is a community where expectations are high, pupils are known as individuals, and success is measured not only by academic achievement but by the character, confidence and sense of purpose with which young people leave us. As the anchor school within the KES Group, the Senior School plays a central role in shaping an exceptional educational journey from 2 to 18.

Sixth Form

The King Edward VI Sixth Form is home to an ambitious, intellectually curious and outward-looking community of young people who are unafraid of challenge and committed to making a positive difference. Unashamedly academic, the Sixth Form combines small class sizes, expert subject teaching and exceptional pastoral support with a rich programme of leadership, enrichment and community engagement, preparing students to flourish at university and beyond.

Students achieve outstanding outcomes. In 2025, 129 applications were made to university, resulting in 62 offers from Russell Group universities, five Oxbridge places and eight students securing places to study Medicine. This year, every Upper Sixth student applying for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science received an offer from their first-choice university, continuing an exceptional record that has seen 49 students progress into these highly competitive degree courses over the past five years. Alongside these academic achievements, Sixth Form students are expected to lead, mentor and contribute to the wider life of the School, leaving King Edward VI as confident, compassionate and independent young adults.

Ethos & Values

King Edward VI School is defined by three values: Do the Right Thing. Lift Others. Keep Growing. Together, they shape the culture of the School, underpin relationships across the community and guide decision-making at every level.

These values are more than aspirational statements; they are lived daily by pupils and staff alike. They are reflected in the way we learn, lead, collaborate and support one another, creating a community where high expectations are matched by kindness, integrity and a shared commitment to continual growth.

For the next Head, these values will provide the foundation for leadership. The successful candidate will champion a culture in which academic ambition is balanced with compassion, where young people are encouraged to fulfil their own potential while helping others to succeed, and where every member of the community is inspired to keep learning, keep growing and contribute positively to the life of the School.

The Opportunity

King Edward VI School is entering its next chapter from a position of considerable strength. Academically ambitious, financially robust and deeply rooted in its values, the School enjoys an outstanding reputation and a clear sense of purpose. The task for the next Head is not one of reinvention but of thoughtful evolution: building upon an exceptional foundation while shaping the School's future with confidence, ambition and clarity. At the same time, the wider context is shifting. Independent schools are operating in an increasingly complex environment – financially, socially and educationally – and the KES Group has responded with clarity, establishing a structure designed to strengthen resilience, coherence and long-term sustainability.

Within this model, the Head of King Edward VI School occupies a uniquely significant position.

First and foremost, the Head is the educational and pastoral leader of the Senior School, accountable to the Executive Principal for the School's performance, culture, educational provision, pupil outcomes, staff leadership, parent relationships, and day-to-day leadership. The postholder is also its public face: representing the School with authority and authenticity to pupils, parents, staff and the wider community and its principal representative in HMC engagement.

Beyond this, the role carries meaningful Group responsibility. As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the Head contributes to the

strategic direction of the wider organisation and plays a key role in ensuring educational coherence across all three schools.

A distinctive and intellectually interesting feature of this appointment is the evolving leadership structure. The Executive Principal role has been established as a transitional position, with the Board explicitly open to the future recombination of Headship and Group leadership.

For the right candidate, therefore, this role offers:

- ◆ The opportunity to lead a high-performing and well-established senior school
- ◆ The chance to shape and influence a developing multi-school group model
- ◆ The possibility – subject to future review – of progressing into a Group Executive leadership role at the end of a transition period

The Governors are seeking a Head who is both deeply committed to the craft of school leadership and capable of engaging with the wider strategic landscape: a leader who can combine educational conviction with organisational awareness and who is energised by the opportunity to lead with both depth and breadth.

Above all, this is a role for a Head who will be visible, thoughtful and decisive – someone who understands what makes a great school distinctive and who has the judgement to preserve, challenge and develop that distinctiveness over time.



Governance & Leadership

The Head reports to the Executive Principal, with direct access to the Chair of Governors and Board on matters of significance, reflecting the seniority and importance of the role within the Group.

The Head is a member of both the Executive Leadership Team and the Group Leadership Team, contributing to strategic decision-making while maintaining a clear focus on the success of the Senior School.

Within the School, the Head leads a strong Senior Leadership Team and works in close partnership with cross-Group leaders, ensuring both operational excellence and strategic alignment.



The Head of King Edward VI School is responsible for the overall leadership of the Senior School and for contributing to the strategic development of the KES Group.

Educational and Pastoral Leadership of King Edward VI School

- ◆ Lead the educational, pastoral, and co-curricular life of the Senior School, ensuring the highest standards of teaching, learning, pupil wellbeing and pupil outcomes
- ◆ Set the strategic direction for the Senior School within the Group framework, working with the Senior School Senior Leadership Team
- ◆ Maintain and develop the School's culture, ethos, and identity – preserving its distinctive character while ensuring it evolves appropriately
- ◆ Be the visible, present, and engaged leader of the school community – pupils, parents, staff, alumni, and friends of the School

- ◆ Take principal responsibility for academic standards, curriculum development, public examination outcomes, and higher education destinations
- ◆ Oversee the Senior School's pastoral provision, including the work of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the safeguarding team
- ◆ Oversee and develop both the breadth and quality of provision and the consequent development of character within the co-curricular life of the School
- ◆ Lead on admissions into the Senior School, including Sixth Form entry, working with the Head of Admissions and Assistant Head (Sixth Form)

Cross-Group Educational Leadership

- ◆ Line manage the Director of Learning & Innovation, with clear accountability for delivering a coordinated educational offer across the Group's three schools

- ◆ Provide leadership on cross-Group pedagogy, curriculum continuity (2–18), educational standards, professional development, and inspection readiness, working in partnership with the Director of Compliance & Whole-School Operations and the Heads of KES Prep and Prince's Mead
- ◆ Contribute to cross-Group educational coherence through the Executive Leadership Team, supporting the Executive Principal in their oversight of educational provision across the Group
- ◆ Report on cross-Group educational matters to the Executive Principal, the Education & Welfare Committee, and the Board as appropriate

Staff Leadership

- ◆ Line manage the Senior School Senior Leadership Team: Deputy Head (Academic), Deputy Head (Pastoral/Designated Safeguarding Lead), Assistant Head (Co-Curricular & Community), and Assistant Head (Sixth Form) and chair meetings of this group

- ◆ Line manage the Director of Learning & Innovation and the Director of Compliance & Whole-School Operations, who have a Group remit
- ◆ Lead on the appointment, appraisal, development and wellbeing of the Senior School teaching and support staff, in partnership with the Director of HR and the Bursar
- ◆ Champion high professional standards, effective performance management, and a strong culture of collaboration and continuous improvement

Financial Stewardship of the Senior School

- ◆ Hold the budget for King Edward VI School, with accountability to the Executive Principal and Finance Committee for the School's financial performance



The Role

- ◆ Work in close partnership with the Bursar on Senior School financial management, fee-setting input, capital priorities, and resource allocation
- ◆ Contribute to Group financial planning through the ELT and Finance Committee

Governance and Committee Engagement

- ◆ Serve on the Executive Leadership Team (meeting fortnightly and including the Executive Principal, the Heads of KES Prep and Prince's Mead, and the Bursar) and Group Leadership Team (meeting fortnightly, comprising the ELT and the Directors of Estates, Learning and Innovation, External Relations, Compliance and Whole-School Operations and HR)
- ◆ Attend all meetings of the Full Governing Body, Education & Welfare Committee, Buildings, Grounds & Infrastructure Committee, Finance Committee, and Development Committee (mirroring the attendance pattern of the Heads

of KES Prep and Prince's Mead). Governance & Nominations Committee attendance is on an ad hoc basis at the invitation of Governors

- ◆ Provide reports to the Board and relevant committees on Senior School matters and cross-Group educational leadership
- ◆ Work effectively with the Executive Principal on Group strategic matters, bringing the Senior School's perspective to executive decision-making

External Engagement

- ◆ Represent King Edward VI School externally, including engagement with HMC (Affiliate Member status, with active participation supported by the Group) and its professional development and sector networks
- ◆ Engage with local, regional, and national educational sector bodies as appropriate to the Senior School's interests
- ◆ Maintain strong relationships with feeder schools, higher education institutions, and local educational networks

- ◆ Work with the Director of External Relations on Senior School marketing, admissions, and development activity

Fundraising & Development

- ◆ Lead Senior School-specific fundraising and alumni engagement, in partnership with the Director of Development and the Director of External Relations
- ◆ Support Group-level major fundraising led by the Executive Principal, including engagement with principal donors whose interests align with the Senior School
- ◆ Build and steward relationships with Senior School alumni, parents, and the wider school community

Safeguarding

- ◆ Take principal accountability for safeguarding at King Edward VI School, leading the School's safeguarding culture and ensuring the highest standards of practice

- ◆ Work with the Deputy Head (Pastoral/DSL) and the Director of Compliance & Whole-School Operations to maintain an effective safeguarding regime
- ◆ Ensure full compliance with all regulatory requirements (KCSIE, ISI, Charity Commission, etc.) in respect of the Senior School

Partnership with the Executive Principal

- ◆ Report to the Executive Principal on Senior School matters and Group-level contributions
- ◆ Contribute actively to the ELT and GLT as a senior executive member of the Group
- ◆ Escalate significant or strategic matters to the Executive Principal in a timely manner
- ◆ Maintain direct access to the Chair of Governors on matters of significance, in accordance with the Group's governance arrangements. The Vice Chair (Senior School) serves as a direct point of contact for governance guidance, mirroring arrangements already in place for the Heads of KES Prep and Prince's Mead with their respective Vice Chairs

The Person

Essential

- ◆ Significant senior leadership experience in an independent school, ideally at Deputy Head or Head level, with a clear record of successful educational and pastoral leadership
- ◆ A strong academic background, understanding of current thinking in respect of pedagogical excellence, and evident commitment to academic excellence, intellectual rigour, and breadth of educational experience
- ◆ Proven ability to lead staff – building teams, developing individuals, managing performance, and creating a strong professional culture
- ◆ Excellent understanding of safeguarding, pastoral care, and the wellbeing of young people
- ◆ Financial literacy and business awareness appropriate to a senior leadership role in a complex independent school
- ◆ Excellent change management and project management skills
- ◆ Commitment to working collaboratively with the Group Bursar to maintain the long-term financial health of the School
- ◆ Outstanding communication and interpersonal skills – able to engage credibly and persuasively with parents, pupils, staff, Governors, and external stakeholders
- ◆ Strong strategic mindset and the ability to contribute effectively at Group executive level
- ◆ Commitment to the ethos and values of KES Group
- ◆ Ability to work collaboratively with the Executive Principal, fellow Heads, the Bursar, and the GLT as peers and partners

- ◆ Willingness to provide cross-Group educational leadership through line management of the Directors of Learning & Innovation and Compliance & Whole School Operations and partnership with fellow Heads, respecting the autonomy of each school while supporting educational cohesion across the Group

Desirable

- ◆ Experience of working in a multi-school group or federated structure
- ◆ Digital literacy and understanding of the threats and opportunities afforded by the application of AI
- ◆ Experience of independent school inspection processes (ISI, Ofsted)
- ◆ Active engagement in HMC or a relevant Heads' association
- ◆ Evidence of ongoing professional learning and development
- ◆ Experience of fundraising, development, or donor cultivation

Personal Qualities

- ◆ Strategic vision balanced with operational rigour
- ◆ Warmth, empathy, and a genuine commitment to young people
- ◆ Resilience, energy, and the personal stamina for Headship
- ◆ Professional humility – able to hold authority with grace and to work with Heads of other schools as equals rather than subordinates
- ◆ Unimpeachable integrity and a strong personal moral compass



Location

King Edward VI School is located on Hill Lane in Southampton, a vibrant and well-connected coastal city offering a rich cultural life, excellent transport links and access to both countryside and coastline.

Terms & Conditions

A highly competitive remuneration package will be offered, reflecting the seniority and scope of the role, including a generous pension and benefits package and fee remission for children (subject to policy).

The appointment will be subject to the usual pre-employment checks, including an enhanced DBS check.



Application Process

The search for the next Head of King Edward VI School is being led by RSAcademics. The successful candidate will be selected by a panel led by the Chair of Governors.

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics to arrange a confidential discussion with one of the consultants handling this appointment:

- ◆ Sarah Glencross, Head of Senior School
Search: sarahglencross@rsacademics.com
- ◆ Richard Backhouse, Head of UK Appointments:
richardbackhouse@rsacademics.com

Closing date: 10.00am (UK time) on Friday 11 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 alongside this candidate information on the RSAcademics [website](https://www.rsacademics.com))
- ◆ A covering letter addressed to Geraint Davies, Chair of Governors. The letter should explain your reasons for applying and 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)20 4626 9791

The process is as follows:

- ◆ All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement within two working days of submitting your application, please contact RSAcademics by telephone

- ◆ **Preliminary interviews** with RSAcademics will take place via Teams on Wednesday 16, Thursday 17 and Friday 18 September 2026
- ◆ **Longlist interviews** with the Governors' selection panel will take place at the School on Thursday 1 October 2026
- ◆ **Shortlisted candidates** will be invited to visit the School during the week commencing 5 October 2026
- ◆ **Final interviews** with the Governors' selection panel will take place at the School on Monday 12 October 2026

N.B. Safer recruitment checks will be undertaken at all stages of the recruitment process.

King Edward VI School, Southampton is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020.

The safeguarding responsibilities of this post are detailed in this candidate information brochure.

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.

