



LITTLEGARTH

Big Opportunities

Chair of Governors

Candidate Information



Welcome



Thank you for your interest in becoming the next Chair of Governors of Littlegarth School. Littlegarth is a special place. Nestled in the beautiful Stour Valley, where Essex meets Suffolk, the school combines academic ambition with warmth, kindness and a deep sense of community. For more than 80 years, generations of children have been encouraged to discover their strengths, grow in confidence and develop a lifelong love of learning.

Today, Littlegarth is a thriving co-educational preparatory school with a strong reputation, a talented and dedicated staff team, and an engaged and supportive parent community. While much has changed since the school was founded in 1940, the values at its heart have remained remarkably constant.

We now find ourselves at an important and exciting moment in the school's history. Following six years of exceptional leadership, Kathy Uttley will retire as Head in summer 2027. The Governors are delighted to have appointed Chris Baalham as her successor from September 2027. As Chair, I will be stepping down in Easter 2027 after completing my term of office.

The incoming Chair will therefore have a unique opportunity to help shape the next chapter of Littlegarth's story. Taking office a term before the new Head arrives, they will guide the Board through an important period of transition and become Chris's principal partner, supporter and critical friend as he establishes himself within the school community.

Littlegarth enters this period from a position of strength. Pupil numbers are healthy; investment in facilities has enhanced the educational experience, and the school enjoys a strong reputation across the region. Yet, like all independent schools, it operates in an increasingly challenging environment. The next Chair will help ensure that Littlegarth remains financially resilient, educationally ambitious and true to the values that have defined it since 1940.

We are seeking a Chair who combines strategic insight with warmth, wisdom and sound judgement. I hope this opportunity resonates with you and that you will be inspired to explore it further.

JIM KEOHANE

Chair of Governors

Littlegarth School is a thriving co-educational preparatory school for approximately 300 pupils aged two to eleven, situated within the beautiful surroundings of Horkesley Park on the Essex-Suffolk border.

Founded in Dedham in 1940 by Barbara Erith and Betty Mallett, the school moved to its current site in 1994. Since then, the campus has evolved significantly while remaining faithful to its founding purpose: providing an outstanding all-round education within a caring and nurturing environment.

Often described by The Good Schools Guide as "a day school which channels the boarding school ethos", Littlegarth offers children the breadth of opportunity, sense of belonging and spirit of adventure more commonly associated with boarding education while retaining the close partnerships with families that define an exceptional day school.

Academic success is important, but it is only part of the story. Littlegarth places equal value

on character, kindness, resilience, creativity and curiosity. The school's success is measured not simply by outcomes but by the confidence, enthusiasm and sense of purpose with which pupils approach life.

LITTLEGARTH AT A GLANCE

- Co-educational day school of 300 pupils aged 2 to 11.
- Nursery, Pre-Prep and Prep provision.
- Expanded to three forms in Years 4 and 5.
- Year-round Nursery provision with government-funded places.
- Excellent destination schools, including grammar schools and leading independent senior schools.
- 67 scholarship offers and seven grammar school places achieved by the 2025 leavers.



About Littlegarth



Life at Littlegarth

Visitors to Littlegarth often comment first on the atmosphere.

There is a sense of energy and purpose throughout the school, but also warmth, laughter and genuine enjoyment. Relationships between pupils, staff and parents are characterised by mutual respect and care, creating an environment in which children feel secure enough to embrace challenge, develop independence and grow in confidence.

The curriculum is broad, ambitious and engaging. Pupils are encouraged to think critically, communicate confidently and develop a genuine enthusiasm for learning. Specialist teaching in languages, humanities, music, drama, dance, art and design technology enriches the educational experience, while dedicated learning support ensures every child is challenged and supported appropriately.

Pastoral care lies at the heart of school life. Small class sizes, close relationships with form tutors, on-site therapeutic support and a strong House system ensure that pupils are known well as individuals and cared for throughout their journey.

Beyond the classroom, children enjoy outstanding opportunities in sport, performing arts and outdoor learning. Specialist PE teaching, extensive musical and dramatic provision, national competitions, Forest School experiences and a rich programme of clubs and educational visits all contribute to a genuinely rounded education.

The result is a school that develops capable learners, confident individuals and compassionate young people who are ready for the next stage of their education and for life beyond it.

The School Today & Tomorrow

RECENT PROGRESS

Littlegarth has enjoyed a sustained period of development and investment. New facilities, including a modern library, refurbished science laboratories and enhanced performance spaces, have strengthened the school's educational offering and supported continuing growth in pupil numbers.

The school has also demonstrated an entrepreneurial approach to income generation and community engagement through initiatives such as large-scale sporting events, commercial lettings, a regional art competition and the successful launch of Learn with Littlegarth.

In 2025, the Nursery moved to year-round provision and began accepting government-funded places, extending accessibility and strengthening the school's early years provision.



LOOKING AHEAD

The appointment of a new Head in September 2027 marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter. The incoming Chair will work closely with Chris Baalham and the Board to shape the next phase of Littlegarth's development while preserving the distinctive culture that makes the school so special.

Key priorities are likely to include:

- Supporting a successful leadership transition.
- Developing and implementing the next strategic plan.
- Sustaining strong pupil recruitment and retention.
- Ensuring long-term financial resilience.
- Continuing to invest in the estate and educational provision.
- Maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding, compliance and pupil welfare.

This is therefore far more than a governance appointment. It is an opportunity to provide leadership, stewardship and encouragement to a thriving school community at a defining point in its history.

Governance

The Governing Body is responsible for the strategic direction of the school and its educational character, financial sustainability, risk management and regulatory compliance. Day-to-day leadership is delegated to the Head and Senior Leadership Team.

Governors bring a broad range of professional expertise and share collective responsibility for ensuring that Littlegarth remains a thriving, sustainable and well-governed school.

Successful governance at Littlegarth is built on partnership, thoughtful challenge, sound judgement, and an unwavering commitment to what is best for children.



The Role

The Chair plays a unique role within the life of the school.

While responsible for leading the Governing Body and ensuring effective governance, the Chair is also a custodian of the school's values and culture. Successful governance depends not only on strong processes and sound decision-making but also on trusted relationships, openness and shared purpose.

The relationship between Chair and Head is particularly important. The most effective Chairs provide support, perspective and encouragement while also offering thoughtful challenge and independent judgement.



LEADERSHIP OF THE BOARD

- Lead the Governing Body as a cohesive, effective and strategically focused team.
- Chair meetings effectively and ensure clear, timely decision-making.
- Oversee Governor recruitment, development and succession planning.
- Promote a culture of accountability, trust and constructive challenge.

STRATEGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Work with the Head and Board to shape and review the strategic direction of the school.
- Ensure effective oversight of finance, investment and risk.
- Help position the school successfully within a changing educational landscape.



PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HEAD

- Support the transition from Kathy Uttley to Chris Baalham.
- Serve as the Head's principal partner and trusted adviser within the Board.
- Provide support, guidance and appropriate challenge.
- Lead the Head's appraisal and oversee arrangements relating to wellbeing and remuneration.

AMBASSADOR AND ADVOCATE

- Act as a visible ambassador for the school.
- Build relationships across the school community and beyond.
- Support development and fundraising initiatives where appropriate.



We are seeking an individual who shares the values of Littlegarth and is excited by the opportunity to help shape its future.

The successful candidate is likely to bring:

EXPERIENCE

- Significant leadership experience.
- Board, trustee or governance experience.
- An understanding of, or strong interest in, education.
- Financial awareness and an understanding of risk.
- A sound understanding of the importance of safeguarding.

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

- Strategic insight and sound judgement.
- The ability to inspire confidence and build consensus.
- Strong communication and relationship-building skills.
- A collaborative and supportive approach.

- The confidence to challenge constructively when required.
- Integrity, warmth and a genuine commitment to education.

Above all, we seek someone who understands that successful governance is ultimately about people: supporting leaders, serving the wider community and ensuring every decision is guided by what is best for children.

TIME COMMITMENT & EXPENSES

- Willingness to dedicate sufficient time to fulfil the responsibilities of the role, including attendance at three Board meetings per annum, committee meetings (if required), strategic planning meetings and school events where possible.
- Availability to attend meetings with the Head and other key staff (which can be online). On occasions, unanticipated situations may arise, requiring an additional commitment.
- Travel and overnight accommodation expenses (should this be required) will be paid, as will fees for any relevant training courses and conferences.



The Person

Closing

The appointment of the next Chair comes at a pivotal and exciting moment for Littlegarth.

This is an opportunity to work with an exceptional school community, support a new generation of leadership and help shape the future of a school that has transformed the lives of children for more than eight decades.

For the right individual, it offers the chance to make a meaningful contribution to a school with a strong sense of purpose, a clear direction of travel and an unwavering commitment to helping young people thrive.

We look forward to hearing from candidates who share that commitment and who are excited by the opportunity to help write the next chapter of the Littlegarth story.



The Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics by email to arrange an initial confidential discussion with Louisa Barham or Andrew Nott, who are leading the search.

- Louisa Barham, Search Consultant:
louisabarham@rsacademics.com
- Andrew Nott, Senior Consultant:
andrewnott@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 for more information.



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