



Kimbolton School
Cambridgeshire



Chief Operating Officer

Candidate Information

Welcome



I'm delighted that you are interested in this crucial leadership role at Kimbolton. It is an exciting time to join our close family of children, parents, staff and friends in this ancient and beautiful school that we are all so proud of. As COO, you will be able to make your own mark on our culture and environment while building on the excellent work of our current Bursar, Jenny Agnew. Working closely with me and our diverse and committed Governors, you will have a key part to play in shaping our future. Our mission is to deliver an outstanding, modern all-round education that challenges children to become curious, courageous and kind young adults with a strong moral compass, able to make a difference to the world. This mission is as important to the operational side of the School as it is to the academic, and it must matter to you personally.

You are applying for this role at a uniquely interesting time to lead a charitable independent school, and you will find a Senior Leadership Team already positively engaged in turning the challenges posed by the economic and political landscape into opportunities to develop our offering and position. That team is new, highly able, and fizzing with ambition for the School. It has never been more important to have an outstanding individual in charge of our operational and financial direction – an optimist who can see commercial opportunities, is brave, is excited to lead change, is comfortable operating in an environment of financial rigour, has excellent people skills and thrives on the adrenaline of variety.

Kimbolton is a large and complex organisation with over 300 staff and more than 1,000 pupils (3–18) set in 120 acres of Cambridgeshire parkland with several heritage buildings. As COO, you will drive the finance and operations strategy that will steward it all

for current and future Kimboltonians. As Clerk to the Governors, you will also maintain a close relationship with our Board and ensure that our governance is compliant with all relevant charity and company law.

We have achieved a lot in the last four years: investment in sporting facilities and sustainable energy has sat alongside careful cost-control and efficiency measures like withdrawing from the Teachers' Pension Scheme, for example. We are now consolidating these successes and stretching into new areas that will bring further growth in the next decade, with a new pre-school opening in January 2026 and an updated estates masterplan and a strategy to embrace the international schools sector both underway. We are committed to remaining agile and open-minded, with all aspects of our business constantly under review, so that we continue to provide a uniquely excellent experience for our pupils while keeping fees manageable for their parents. Our new COO will play a pivotal part in this.

I encourage applications from outstanding individuals from any sector who feel that they can bring to Kimbolton the quality, vision and passion for young people's education that I have outlined above (and a sense of humour, too!). I invite you to read our **Vision, Mission and Ethos** if you would like to understand more about the School. I do hope that you will apply.

Yours sincerely,



Will Chuter
Headmaster

About Us

Kimbolton School is a thriving co-educational independent day and boarding school for over 1,000 children aged 3 to 18. Most children attend as day pupils, with a small boarding community of up to 60 UK and international children. Kimbolton's 'one school, one family' ethos fosters an atmosphere in which all pupils feel valued and supported, creating strong relationships and a deep sense of belonging.

The School is situated in stunning surroundings in the village of Kimbolton in Cambridgeshire, close to the borders of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Though rural in its setting, Kimbolton is well located and easily accessible from Cambridge, Bedford, Wellingborough and Peterborough. London is also just 40 minutes away by train from its nearest station.

The Senior School is located around Kimbolton Castle, while the Preparatory School is housed to the west on the original Grammar School site. Boarding is available for pupils aged 11–18, and the School offers flexible, weekly or full-time options. The two boarding houses sit on the historic village High Street, adjacent to the School.

High academic standards and a genuine love of learning permeate all stages of the School, resulting in outstanding GCSE and A-level results. In 2025, 61% of grades at GCSE were 9–7, and 73% were A*–B at A-level. Almost all of the Prep School pupils progress to the Senior School, and Sixth Formers leave the School well equipped for the modern world, with the vast majority taking up places at their universities of choice, including Oxbridge and other Russell Group establishments.

The School is committed to enrichment at every stage, with an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities to nurture all talents beyond the classroom. Sport plays an important part in life at the School, with an extensive fixture list, and everyone participates. Music, art and drama are also central to the curricular and extra-curricular programme, with an impressive range of opportunities for creative expression at all ages.

The School owns a subsidiary company, Kimbolton School Enterprises (KSE), which transacts all non-charitable trading activity and offers many opportunities for the development of new income streams for the School.



Campus & Facilities



The School enjoys a unique setting, nestled within 120 acres of beautiful parkland, with Kimbolton Castle at its heart. Buildings across the estate range from modern, purpose-built school facilities to the historic Castle and other heritage buildings with Grade 1 and 2 listings. Highlights include the Vanbrugh Library, which is well used by Senior School pupils, and the Queen Katharine Building, which offers 2700m² of learning space dedicated to STEM. The School boasts exceptional sports facilities, with a 25m indoor pool, two astro-turf hockey pitches, a sports hall and squash courts, 120 acres of grass pitches, and several hardcourt netball and tennis surfaces.

The Prep School has outstanding facilities, including a sports hall, a performance space, a Digital Learning Suite and a forest school area. Prep pupils also have access to many areas of the wider school site. The school campus is not an enclosed, standalone site, but is very much part of the village. The relationships between the School and local residents are strong, and many facilities are available for use by the public and wider community.

Continuous maintenance and development of the site are undertaken to ensure the facilities remain first-class. The swimming pool was recently refurbished, creating a state-of-the-art resource, and a wellbeing room was created. A planned upgrade of the sports grounds is underway and should be completed ready for the next academic year.

The early stages of planning to refurbish the Lewis Hall, the performing arts venue, are underway. This redevelopment is likely to take place in the next three years.

As the starting point to an overall estate masterplan, an audit of the entire estate has been carried out to understand the underlying maintenance and regulatory requirements for each of the properties across the sites, including the very specific needs of the heritage buildings.

There is ongoing investment in technology for staff and with the roll-out of devices for pupil use, as well as the use of IT to generate efficiencies across various school and back-office functions.



Leadership & Governance

Kimbolton School is a charitable company limited by guarantee, charity number 1098586 and company number 4726427. The School has a wholly owned subsidiary, Kimbolton School Enterprises Limited (company number 02655855), through which the School manages external letting of the buildings and facilities.

The School is supported by a highly experienced and knowledgeable Board of Governors with a wide range of relevant experience. The Governors, who are also directors and charity trustees, are responsible for the overall management and control of the School. The Governing Body meets four times a year with the Headmaster, Chief Operating Officer (COO) and other members of school staff in attendance. The work of the Governing Body is subdivided across a number of committees, all of which the COO attends. The chief regular committees are Finance, Estates, Education,

Risk and People & Culture, and Governors also meet under the headings of Nominations, Bursaries and Remuneration. The Governing Body is supported by the COO in their role as Clerk to the Governors.

Executive day-to-day management of the School is delegated to the Headmaster, COO and Head of Prep, supported by members of the School's Leadership Teams. Each school has its own Senior Leadership Team, and there is one overarching Whole-School Leadership Team that combines leaders from all areas of the School's operations.

The School is regularly inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, and the relevant reports can be found on the School's [website](#). The Independent Schools Inspectorate carried out an inspection early in the Autumn Term 2025, and the School awaits its report.



Finance

Kimbolton's finances are healthy. The School generates a surplus, has no debt and has strong pupil numbers despite the recent changes impacting the independent school sector. Total gross income for the year ending 31 August 2024, including donations, was £20.4m. The School has healthy cash reserves and is well placed financially.

Additional income is generated through the Enterprises company, which predominantly provides lettings of the Castle, sports facilities and swimming pool. The range of letting and income-generating opportunities is being expanded in order to increase this strand of income to support the School at a time when there is ever-increasing pressure on school fees.

A new pre-school nursery will open in January 2026, which will increase pupil numbers and strengthen the pipeline of pupils into the School.

Work continues in developing relationships with current and former pupils and their parents and has resulted in philanthropic donations being received by the School for specific projects and developments.

Bursaries are funded from fee income and the bursary fund.

Full financial information is provided in the annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31 August 2024, which can be found [here](#).



The Opportunity



This role provides an outstanding opportunity for a strategic, commercial and collegiate leader to drive forward the business functions of the School. Working in conjunction with the Headmaster, Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body, they will be instrumental in building on the current strategy to further develop and strengthen the financial, operational and commercial activities to ensure the School's long-term success.

The COO reports to the Headmaster on a day-to-day basis, and as Clerk to the Board, they report to, and are accountable to, the Chair of Governors. As a key member of the Whole-School Leadership Team, the COO will be expected to play an active role in school life and the wider Kimbolton community.

The COO will be responsible for the effective leadership and management of the operational functions of the School, including finance, estates, HR, IT, compliance, health and safety, catering and commercial activities. They will be supported by an experienced and skilful team of middle and senior leaders, who respond well to a COO who is visible and approachable and who rolls up their sleeves and gets things done.

Candidates will be able to demonstrate proven ability in executive leadership and financial control, balancing the needs and challenges of large complex organisations, managing resources, delivering results, thinking strategically, and inspiring and motivating high-functioning teams at all levels. An outstanding communicator, they will need to demonstrate compassion and the ability to quickly win the respect and trust of the School and wider communities.

The role requires resilience, someone who seeks continuous improvement and not only rises to but also welcomes the challenge and operates at pace.

A strong skillset, including finance, strategic planning and execution, and operational delivery, is required. The COO will demonstrate commercial acumen, coupled with first-rate analytical and business skills, together with good humour, dedication and kindness.

Prior experience in the education sector is not a prerequisite. Applications are encouraged from candidates from a diverse range of professional backgrounds who can evidence strong commercial and operational expertise and a demonstrable track record of successfully leading multi-disciplinary teams through a collaborative and enabling style. Candidates will demonstrate empathy with independent education, as well as commitment to the ethos and values of Kimbolton.

The COO has overall responsibility for a diverse team of 200 support staff. The COO has the following direct reports in addition to their Executive Assistant:

- Deputy Bursar/Head of Finance
- HR Manager
- Head of Maintenance
- Director of IT
- Head of Grounds
- Domestic Services Manager
- Health and Safety Manager
- Commercial Operations Officer
- Nursing Team
- Swimming Pool Managers
- Head of Security
- Catering Manager
- Shop Manager



Key Responsibilities

Strategy

- Work in close partnership with the Headmaster to implement the School's vision and strategic plan, particularly in respect of finance, infrastructure, commercial development, alternative revenue generation and operational delivery.
- Contribute beyond the core functions of the COO's finance and operational brief as a business planner and commercial thinker, ensuring that the School seizes commercial opportunities that the rapidly evolving external financial, political and demographic landscape presents.

Leadership and Management

- Lead and inspire the support staff and facilitate strong working relationships between the teaching and support staff.
- Seek and implement opportunities to enhance the integration of support functions within the School and subsidiary companies.
- Be a strong ambassador for the School, embracing its ethos and values..
- Promote modern business practices and drive initiatives to ensure operations are consistent with a leading independent school whilst maintaining important and valuable traditions.
- Develop and nurture effective relationships with key external service providers, professionals, and partners, including banks, auditors, insurers and legal advisers, local government, local planners, historic building advisers, the wider local community, and ISBA.
- Manage the performance of direct reports.
- Support the training and professional development of direct reports and the wider support staff.

Finance

Working closely with the Deputy Bursar, who is a CIMA-qualified accountant and leads the Finance team, the COO will:

- Manage the financial performance of the School, maintaining a sustainable, forward-looking strategic financial plan.
- Advise the Governors, Headmaster and SLTs on all matters relating to financial strategy, including allocation of resources and the impact of their decisions on the School's financial position and commercial matters.

- Ensure that a robust system of financial planning and control operates across the School consistent with strategy, policies and procedures.
- Advise the Headmaster and Governing Body on borrowing requirements and cashflow projections, manage debt and ensure compliance with any covenants as appropriate.
- Oversee the work of the Deputy Bursar and their team, including budgets, forecasts, management and statutory accounts, the annual audit, billing, revenue collection, purchase ledger records and supplier payments, the processing of the payroll and pensions, the Asset Register, insurance purchasing, VAT and other tax arrangements.
- Provide clear financial reporting to the Headmaster, Governing Body and SLT.
- Ensure fair and robust debtor management.
- Analyse school fees and costs, including benchmarking, and work with the Governors and Headmaster to set fee levels and salaries.
- Oversee the School's bursary and hardship application process.
- Ensure that the School secures best value from contracts and procurement arrangements.

Estates

In close liaison with the Head of Maintenance, Head of Grounds and Health and Safety Manager:

- Ensure the effective management of the School's estate in line with its objectives, protecting its integrity and seeking opportunities to enhance its value.
- Develop and maintain an effective, forward-looking masterplan that supports the strategic vision.
- Identify the School's infrastructure requirements in order of priority and drive the project programme from concept to delivery.
- Lead the delivery of capital projects to time, specification and budget with support from appointed project professionals.
- Ensure delivery of a planned maintenance programme for all school buildings and grounds, including amenity areas, gardens, sports pitches and all-weather pitches, to the required standard and compliant with statutory regulations, including health and safety, fire and the Independent School Standards.
- Seek to integrate sustainable solutions and initiatives to reduce the School's environmental footprint and energy consumption.

- Develop and maintain good relationships with the local community, especially those within Kimbolton village and the local authority and planning departments, including successful negotiation of planning permission for development and heritage projects.

HR

In liaison with the Head of HR:

- Oversee the provision of an effective, proactive HR function that follows best practice, including recruitment, induction and training, contract documentation, payroll, pension arrangements and benefits, performance monitoring, talent development, retention, record management, including the Single Central Register, and staff wellbeing.
- Ensure the Headmaster, senior management and department heads have access to advice and data to manage employment matters.

IT

- Work with the IT Strategy Group to ensure the IT strategy is aligned to the School's strategic plan.
- 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.
- Take overall responsibility for the safety, security and integrity of the School's IT network and digital data.

Operations

Working closely with the Domestic Services Manager, Catering Manager, Lead Nurse, Swimming Pool team, Head of Security and Safeguarding team:

- Ensure the effective and efficient delivery of all domestic services operations, including management of staff, including the Wellbeing team, negotiating contracts for services and purchase arrangements for supplies.
- Ensure effective management of school transport, including maintenance of the school vehicle fleet.
- Oversee arrangements for vehicular traffic to, from and within the sites.
- Ensure the high-quality provision of catering services and value for money.
- Ensure site security is effective and adequately protects pupils and staff.
- Ensure the Health Centre is led and managed effectively and that compliance with relevant legislation is maintained.

- Ensure the swimming pool is led and managed effectively for use by the School, local swimming clubs, and the local community.

Commercial Activities

- In close liaison with the Commercial Operations Officer, oversee the commercial operations of Kimbolton School Enterprises Ltd to maximise income generation from the School's assets and infrastructure and expand into new markets to develop revenue-earning opportunities.
- Manage the swimming pool and school shop managers.
- Coordinate the preparation and presentation of business cases for major projects.

Governance, Compliance and Risk Management

- As Clerk to the Governors, and with the support of their Executive Assistant, ensure the School complies with all charity and company law and adheres to its Articles of Association and they remain fit for purpose.
- Support the efficient operation of the Board and its Committees through the Chair by providing the necessary information, arranging training, visits, meetings, agendas and papers, as well as updates on legislative and statutory changes.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, ensuring policies, procedures and training are in place and champion their application throughout the School.
- Oversee the School's Data Protection arrangements.
- Drive the identification, assessment, and management of business risk, including the management of the risk assessment process and Risk Register.
- Ensure that the School has appropriate insurance cover for all key insurable risks.
- Advise on business continuity planning to ensure that the School is well prepared for any emergency.
- Promote a positive health and safety culture throughout the School and fulfil all the COO's responsibilities in accordance with the School's Health and Safety Policy and Manual.

Safeguarding and Welfare of Children

Kimbolton School is dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its boarding and day pupils, regardless of age, ability, race, culture, religion, sexuality or class. Safeguarding is integrated into the school ethos. It is the duty of all members of staff, including full-time, part-time and volunteers, both teaching and support, to play an active role in ensuring the safety and promoting the welfare of the children in the School's care. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Person Specification

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 strategy and operations.
- Experience of working within a complex budgetary structure and embracing, managing and promoting change.
- Proven experience of leading and developing high-performing, multi-disciplinary teams.
- Experience of project management is desirable.
- Familiarity with working within a regulatory framework.

Skills and Knowledge

- Strong strategic abilities and organisational 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.
- Demonstrable knowledge of property, HR, IT, health and safety, legal and other issues.

- First-class communication and negotiation skills – able to balance robustness with constructive, positive discussion and diplomacy.
- Strong interpersonal skills and high levels of emotional intelligence.
- 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, compassionate and charismatic leader who can work both independently and as a key team member to inspire confidence in all stakeholders and encourage and motivate staff.
- Excited by high expectations, creative thinking and achievement of ambitious targets in all areas of school life and strategy.
- Demonstrable energy, stamina and drive with attention to detail.
- High levels of self-awareness, humility and flexibility, as well as an open and collaborative leadership style.
- Personal integrity, kindness, warmth and sound judgement.
- Dedicated, optimistic and resilient with good humour.
- Values and promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.





Appointment Terms



A highly competitive 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 holiday entitlement of 30 days plus statutory bank holidays.
- A generous fee remission for children who gain admission to the School.
- Contributory employer's pension scheme.
- Subsidised private health care.
- Complimentary school lunches during term time when the kitchens are operational.
- Free onsite car parking, free access to a fully equipped gym and swimming pool, Octopus electric vehicle scheme, and Cycle to Work scheme.

Kimbolton School is committed to the fair treatment of its employees and future employees and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified persons regardless of their race, sex, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or age.

Kimbolton School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff 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 (DBS) and a review of their social media presence.

All appointments are subject to satisfactory references, enhanced DBS and other statutory checks, proof of identity and eligibility to work in the UK, completion of a medical questionnaire and proof of qualifications. All applicants are requested to read the Safeguarding Policy [document](#).

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

Closing date: 10.00am on Monday 10 November 2025.

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

You should submit:

- A completed application form (available to download from www.rsacademics.com).
- A covering letter addressed to the Headmaster, Mr Will Chuter. 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): 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 on Friday 14 November and Monday 17 November 2025.
- **Longlist interviews** will take place at Kimbolton School on Thursday 27 November 2025.
- **Shortlist interviews** will take place at Kimbolton School on Friday 5 December 2025.



Founded in 2002 by Russell Speirs, RSAcademics has advised and supported over 700 schools and educational organisations in the UK and worldwide. Through our working partnerships with heads, leadership teams, boards, staff and parents, we specialise in supporting schools in five main areas: strategy, marketing and research; equality, diversity and inclusion; operational improvement; leadership and governance and philanthropy. We enable schools worldwide to thrive by finding and developing senior leaders, guiding decision makers, making connections and shaping debate. We are known for the calibre and spirit of our people. We exist entirely to serve schools because we believe that the world needs thriving schools. Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.

RSAcademics is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in schools and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.