



Group Director of People

Candidate Information



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the role of Director of People 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 continues to show strong demand for

places, low staff turnover and real momentum across major estate, digital and organisational projects. In this context, the strength of our people strategy will be central to our next phase of development. We are therefore seeking an outstanding Director of People to lead and develop a modern, high-performing people function across the Group – shaping culture, deepening engagement, strengthening leadership and ensuring that every member of staff is supported to thrive.

The purpose of this role is both clear and significant: to provide strategic and operational leadership for all people matters across the Group, ensuring that our approach to recruitment, retention, reward, employee relations, wellbeing, inclusion and professional development is ambitious, coherent and future-focused. Reporting to the Chief Operating Officer, with a dotted line to me as CEO, the Director of People will be a key member of the Professional Services Leadership Team (PSLT), working closely with the Heads of each school to create a positive, inclusive and high-trust working environment in which colleagues can perform at their best.

If you are energised by the opportunity to shape culture, develop people and help lead a values-driven organisation through an ambitious period of growth, 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 enabling both young people and colleagues to flourish.

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 with 500 employees 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.

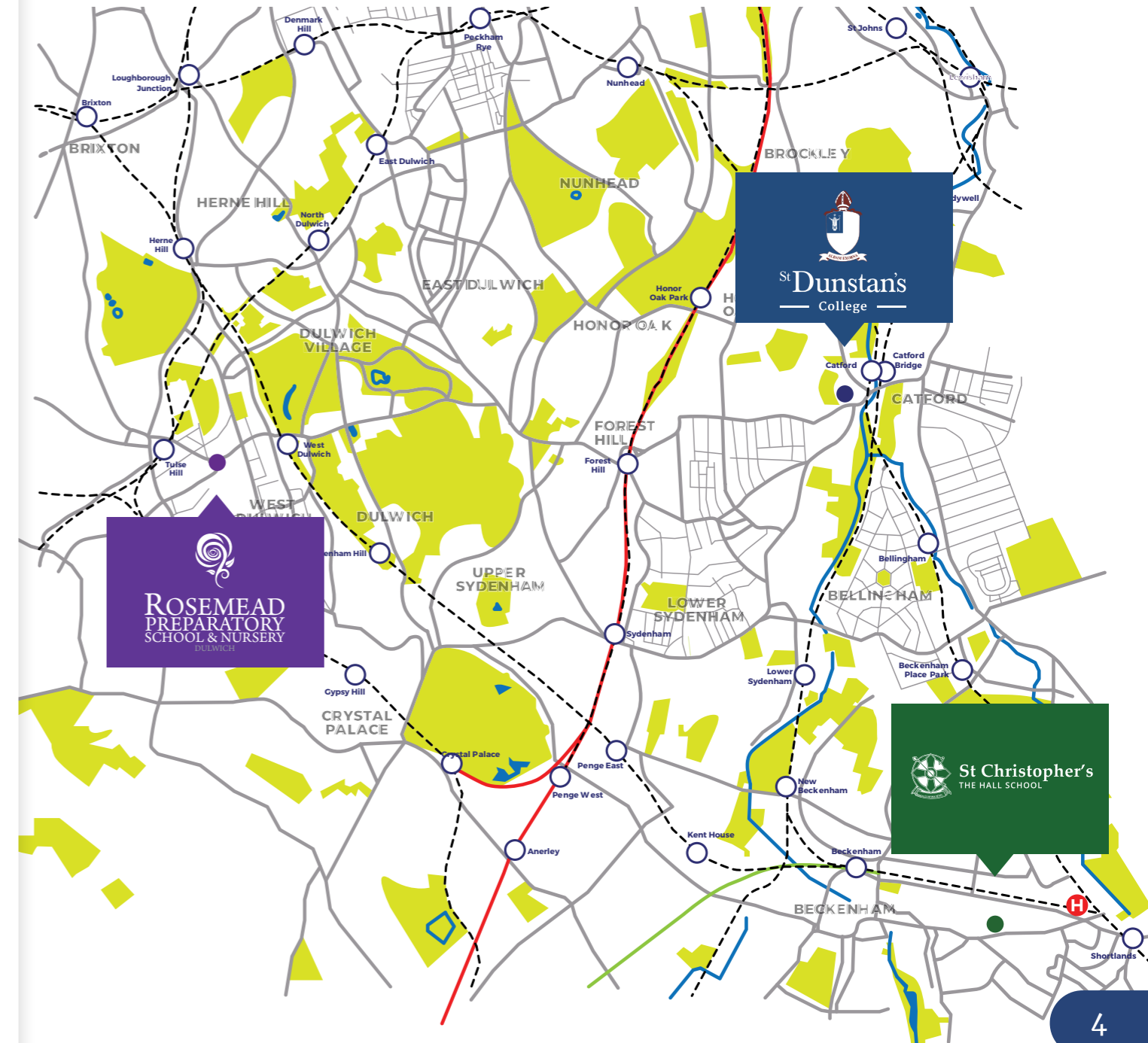
Our Schools and Activities

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.

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.





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.*

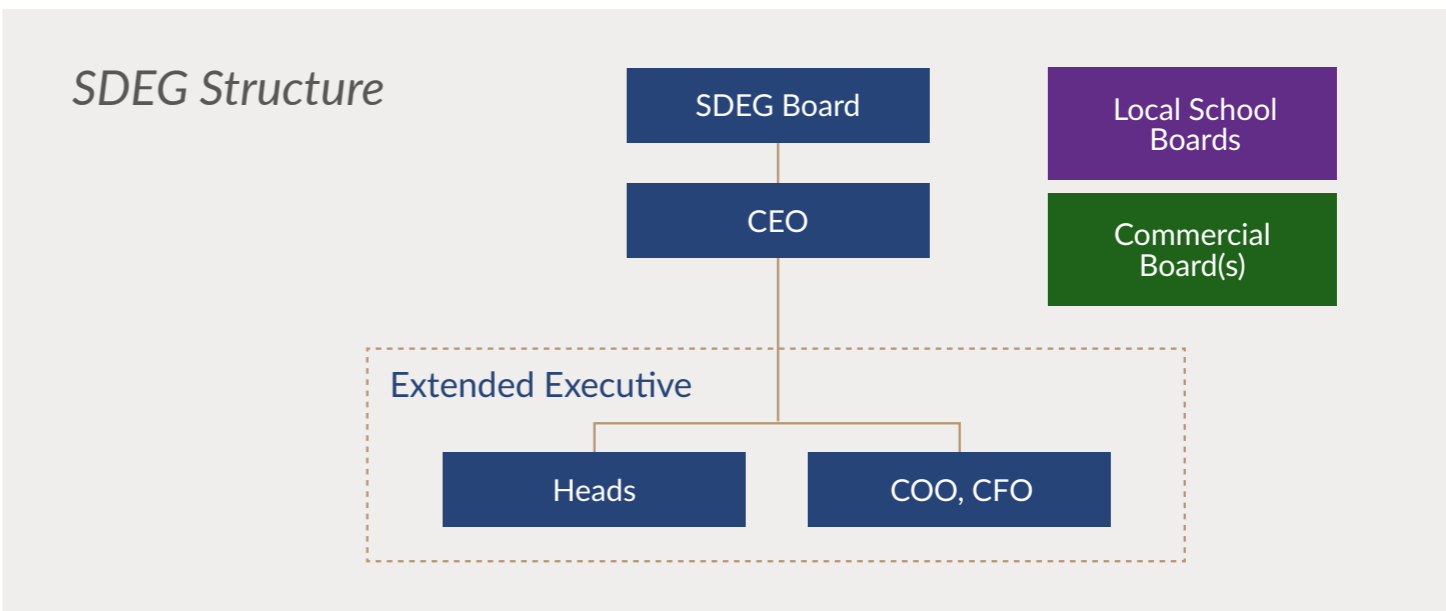
Following the review of governance, we have moved from a traditional Board of Governors with committees and termly meetings to a smaller, more agile Board, which will meet more frequently and

be strategically focused. Agendas are derived from an annual agenda plan with key documents driving deliberations. The Director of People will attend meetings as relevant and will attend and contribute to the annual strategy day.

The Nurseries and Enterprise Boards will meet quarterly; the International Board will meet annually.

Each school will have its own Local School Board, which will meet termly.

The governance structure is set out below.





The Opportunity

This is a significant and exciting opportunity for an accomplished people leader to shape and deliver a modern, ambitious and values-led people strategy across St Dunstan's Education Group. The Director of People will lead the Group's approach to recruitment, retention, reward, employee relations, professional development, wellbeing and inclusion, ensuring that the people agenda supports school improvement, organisational growth and a positive, high-trust working environment. As the Group continues to grow, the post-holder will play a central role in strengthening culture, organisational effectiveness and the experience of colleagues across the Group.

Reporting to the COO, with a dotted line to the CEO, the Director of People will be a key member of the Professional Services Leadership Team (PSLT), leading the HR Team across the Group and providing expert advice on complex people matters. Working closely with the Heads of each school, they will help to create a positive, inclusive and high-trust working environment in which colleagues can thrive and perform at their best. The role will involve developing team capability, setting clear standards and KPIs, and

ensuring that people systems, policies and processes are coherent, compliant and effective across a growing multi-school organisation.

This is a strategic and operational leadership role requiring deep HR sector expertise, high-quality service delivery and strong interpersonal skills across the full breadth of people management. Candidates will bring a strong track record of leading HR or People functions in complex organisations, with experience of shaping culture, managing change, advising on sensitive employee relations matters and building effective teams and systems. They will combine a clear understanding of employment law and compliance with the ability to think strategically, work collaboratively across multiple sites and influence with credibility at a senior level. Experience of working in education or another regulated, mission-led environment would be an advantage.

The HR team currently consists of eight staff, including three business partners assigned to specific schools and a project manager (fixed term) responsible for the implementation of a new payroll system.



Job Description

Strategy and Leadership

- Lead and deliver a Group-wide people strategy aligned to the SOP and the Group's educational, organisational priorities and school improvement.
- Provide strategic advice to the CEO, Governors and the Executive Team, including the Heads, on workforce planning, culture, organisational development and people-related risk.
- Lead the HR Team across the Group, building a professional, service-focused function with clear standards, strong capability and a culture of continuous improvement underpinned by effective KPIs.
- Manage the HR staffing budget, actively pursuing opportunities to deliver efficiencies together with developing capacity and capability to support the Group as it grows and matures.

Employee Relations and Engagement

- Facilitate and promote an effective, risk-based approach that protects the Group and fosters a positive, inclusive and high-trust culture through effective communication, staff engagement and a solution-focused approach.
- Ensure the delivery of high-quality and appropriate employee relations advice at all levels.
- Lead on complex employee relations matters, ensuring that cases are managed fairly, consistently and with sound judgment.

- Provide expert guidance, support and coaching to senior leaders and managers on disciplinary, grievance, performance, absence and other people issues.

Recruitment, Retention and Talent Development

- Oversee recruitment and onboarding across the Group, partnering with the Heads of each school to ensure timely appointments, strong candidate experience and the integration of new hires.
- Develop strategies to strengthen staff retention, deepen engagement and build the Group's reputation as an employer of choice.
- Lead the development and implementation of performance management, appraisal, training and career development frameworks across the Group.

Safer Recruitment and the Single Central Register

- Ensure full compliance with the statutory safer recruitment requirements.
- Ensure the Single Central Register is maintained and compliant at all times.

Compliance and Risk Management

- Ensure that the Group's HR policies, practices, procedures and reporting are compliant with employment law, safeguarding and wider regulatory requirements.
- Lead on governance, audit and risk within the HR function, including oversight of UKVI requirements, the Single Central Register and relevant inspections and audits.

- Keep abreast of legal and regulatory developments, ensuring that policy, practice and guidance across the Group remain current, effective and in line with best practice.

Reward, Systems and Reporting

- Oversee payroll, benefits and reward processes across the Group, ensuring accuracy, compliance and an employee experience that reflects the Group's values and aspirations.
- Lead the development of fair, competitive and sustainable reward approaches, including benchmarking, job evaluation and salary review processes.
- Ensure that HR systems and data are accurate, secure and used effectively to support workforce planning, management information and strategic decision-making.

Wellbeing and Inclusion

- Lead and champion a Group-wide approach to staff wellbeing, ensuring that support services, initiatives and communications promote a healthy and positive working environment.
- Develop and oversee effective staff feedback mechanisms, including surveys, wellbeing forums and other engagement channels, ensuring that action is taken in response to key themes.
- Embed equity, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of the people agenda, helping to build a culture in which all colleagues feel valued, respected and able to thrive.
- Act as the wellbeing representative on each school's Health and Safety Committee.

Personal Professional Development

- Model a culture of continuous improvement in the knowledge of people management processes.
- Remain up to date with employment law.





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 bring the following qualifications, skills and knowledge, and personal attributes.

Qualifications and Experience

- Degree appropriate to HR and/or Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development qualification, minimum at Level 5 and preferably at Level 7.
- A strong track record of HR leadership with strategic and operational achievements in a business partnering, service-focused environment.
- Experience of leading a team and advising senior leaders on complex and sensitive people matters.
- Experience of managing core HR processes, including recruitment, employee relations, performance management, absence, organisational change and workforce development.
- Experience of reporting at senior or board level and, ideally, of working within education or another regulated, mission-led environment.

Skills and Knowledge

- An excellent understanding of UK employment law and good HR practice.
- Deep knowledge of recruitment and retention, employee relations, organisational development, pay and reward, and professional development.

- A strong understanding of safeguarding, safer recruitment and the compliance responsibilities associated with working in schools.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills with the ability to present information clearly to a range of audiences, including Governors and senior leaders.
- Effective high-level problem-solving skills with the ability to think strategically.
- Strong interpersonal, organisational and analytical skills, with the ability to think strategically, interpret complex information and work effectively across a multi-site, multi-stakeholder organisation.
- Effective budget management and ability to drive operational efficiencies and improvements in service.
- Highly effective organisational, administrative and IT skills with the ability to plan, prioritise and manage the delivery of complex HR activity.

Personal Attributes

- A visible, compassionate and highly professional individual who can work both independently and as a key team member to inspire confidence in all stakeholders and encourage and motivate staff.
- Ambitious for staff with a modern and values-based approach.
- High levels of self-awareness, humility and flexibility, as well as an open and collaborative working style.
- Personal integrity, resilient, kindness, warmth and sound judgment.
- Values and promotes equity, diversity and inclusion.





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:

- 25 days' annual holiday entitlement plus Christmas closure and Bank Holidays.
- Contributory pension scheme.
- 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:

- Hannah Freestone-Smith, Search Consultant: hannahfreestone-smith@rsacademics.com
- Nina Lambert, Head of Professional Services Appointments: ninalambert@rsacademics.com

Closing date: 10.00am UK time on Monday 10th August 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 Nick 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 during the week commencing 17th August 2026.
- Longlist interviews will take place during the week commencing 24th August 2026.
- Shortlist interviews will take place at St Dunstan's during the week commencing 7th September 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.

RS Academics 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.



Because the world needs schools to **thrive**



St Dunstan's
EDUCATION
GROUP



Excellence. Differently.

Registered Charity: 1208941 Company Number: 14407568