



Lycée International
BRITISH · SECTION

Head of Primary

For August 2026 (preferred) or January 2027

CANDIDATE INFORMATION



Welcome

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This is a fascinatingly different early years and primary leadership role. There is the potential to make a significant impact in the unique educational setting of the British Section of the Lycée International.

The British Section is the largest of the 14 international sections within the Lycée International, one of France's most successful schools, situated 25km west of Paris in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The British Section has 840 students across Primary and Secondary and is a vibrant, supportive and inclusive community. It is governed as a separate non-profit association within the wider Lycée International structure. The new Head of Primary will succeed Susan Woodward, who is retiring after 14 years of dedicated service.

Leading within such a unique structure requires care, creativity and, perhaps above all, adaptability. British Section students are either full-time students of the Lycée International and partner schools – admitted through the Section but spending only part of their time learning within it – or *externé* students, joining the British Section from their local French school for two half-days per week. Time in the British Section is focused on English language and literature and some history and geography. However, it is much more than that: British Section students and their families treat the Section as their home, and they identify with it. Continuing to foster a sense of community and belonging will be an important priority for the Head of Primary.

Under the leadership of James Cathcart, the British Section has established an outstanding reputation for delivering British and anglophone elements of a bilingual and bicultural education. The Section plays an influential role within the Lycée International and beyond, in British education in France, and in bilingual schools more generally. There is potential to do more, and the Section's vision includes a commitment to the Lycée becoming a *laboratoire* of international educational research. As part of the British Section's Senior Leadership Team, the new Head of Primary must be enthusiastic about finding ways for the Section, and for Primary in particular, to become even more innovative and influential.



Welcome



The role requires a combination of pedagogical, strategic and community leadership. The Head of Primary will require the experience to deliver this, but they also should have the confidence, flexibility and humility to understand the context, appreciating where their experience is not relevant as much as where it is. As the Section further develops, the new Head will also need to support the Primary team through change. They will work in close partnership with the Director, other members of the Senior Leadership Team, senior leaders within the French partner schools, and leaders and teachers elsewhere within the Lycée, as well as with a diverse community of families.

The role will suit a candidate who is attracted by the challenge of a very different educational environment, but one that is characterised by high ambition. The Head of Primary will need to be creative and visionary, but also hands-on and very present in the day-to-day life of the Section. They will be enthusiastic about keeping abreast of the latest educational thinking but discriminating in understanding what will work best in the British Section's distinctive context. They should also be comfortable leading a small team while recognising that the potential for influence and impact is far greater than with most teams of a similar size. Proficiency in French would be a significant advantage; a commitment to learning French is a minimum expectation.

The position is available from August 2026, but for the right candidate, a January start may be possible.



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The British Section

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The Lycée International is one of France's most successful and respected French state institutions. It has a total student body of c.4,000. Of 840 pupils in the British Section, approximately 340 are in the Early Years (*maternelle*) and Primary. The Lycée has undergone an extensive rebuilding and refurbishment programme, completed in 2020, to equip it to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.

The Lycée International offers a genuinely bilingual and bicultural education. Students in the international sections follow the French national curriculum, taught by French staff, alongside six to eight hours a week of language, literature, history and geography taught to the relevant national standard by teachers employed by their section.

This means that alongside the French national curriculum (leading to the French state qualification, *Diplôme national du brevet*), British Section pupils follow the EYFS and British primary curriculum and go on to sit OxfordAQA International GCSE English Language in Year 11, graduating with the British version of the *Baccalauréat Français International* (BFI) in Year 13.

The beauty of the model is that while students in the international sections spend more time each week in classes led by French teachers, most identify in the first instance with their section. This is no less the case with the British Section, which has a formidable reputation in its own right for providing an outstanding bilingual and bicultural education.

Such is the demand for places that many of the international sections work with a system of partner schools. The demand for Anglo-French bilingual education is especially strong, and the British Section works with five partner schools (three in Early Years and Primary) in Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Le Pecq. Three of these schools host other international sections, resulting in especially rich, multicultural learning environments.

Students from the partner French schools – *externés* – spend one morning and afternoon per week in the British Section. These pupils make up 70% of the Early Years and Primary so that the British Section more than doubles the number of children from Nursery to Year 6 accessing an immersive bilingual education. *Externés* are encouraged to develop a strong association with the Section; they share equal status with full-time students, and they become full-time students from middle school onwards.

The Section's approach has changed significantly over the past two decades, and there is now more emphasis on understanding each pupil's individual bilingual context. James Cathcart has led the British Section for 16 years and is also a prominent advocate for bilingual and bicultural education in British and anglophone environments. As part of its School Improvement Plan, the British Section has established a vision centred around five themes: Personal & Academic Growth; Authenticity & Enrichment; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; Community, Engagement & Communication; and Facing the Future. Work in each area will strengthen the Section's offer of a genuinely British educational experience while also enabling it to become more influential, innovative and experimental within the Lycée International and beyond. Specific areas for development in Primary include progression and assessment frameworks, responding to new thinking on how bilingual children learn, and more emphasis on character development.

The British Section's teaching staff all hold British teaching qualifications. There is also a dedicated administrative team, plus four librarians who provide a comprehensive service for the British Section libraries in the Lycée International and the partner schools.

The British Section

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British Section Aims and Values

- To provide an authentic British educational programme as part of the bilingual curriculum delivered within the framework of the French schooling system.
- To inspire a love of learning and to help pupils explore and nurture their individual personality, talents and interests.
- To provide a safe, friendly and supportive environment in which pupils feel valued as individuals.
- To work collaboratively with pupils, parents, and our French colleagues to maximise each child's personal development, well-being and achievement.
- To help pupils to cultivate the attributes of independent, reflective and creative life-long learners and to become responsible and engaged global citizens.
- To enable anglophone children and children learning English as an additional language to develop high levels of academic literacy in English.
- To enable pupils to continue their education and professional lives in the UK or another anglophone country.
- To promote an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and facilitate international mobility.
- To foster a vibrant, welcoming and supportive community.

The Early Years and Primary Curriculum

The British Section's Early Years/*maternelle* curriculum focuses on the progressive development of English language skills. Children are given opportunities for investigative activities alongside structured play and collaborative work inspired by a wide range of age-appropriate books and resources. Initially, this involves speaking and listening, vocabulary and syntax, and phonics work that is a foundation for the early stages of reading and emergent writing. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are further developed in Years 1 and 2, when the children are also learning to read and write in French. Alongside this, the curriculum and values of kindness and respect are developed, and children are encouraged to be courteous and caring members of their class and school community.

The Primary curriculum is intended to be a seamless continuum from the *maternelle* years, with books starting to be used within a topic-based approach. The UK national curriculum is tailored to the bilingual and bicultural context. The aim is to:

- develop language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, while
- challenging and stretching young minds, and
- using traditional and modern methods of teaching.



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The British Section

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Pupils are supported to develop a love of reading and to write independently, enabling them to become effective communicators and giving them the skills and confidence to transition to Secondary.

All pupils have weekly library sessions. The Section teaching teams and librarians encourage pupils to try new genres and build their readiness for Secondary.

Historical skills are developed by sequencing and ordering in *maternelle* and by developing the skills of change, continuity and chronology in Primary. The objective is to lay the foundations of historical skills and understanding and to arouse an interest in the past. Residential trips, including a historically based visit to Normandy (Year 6), support the curriculum and help to develop kindness, mutual respect, curiosity, creativity and independence. The Normandy trip explores the cultural and historical links between France and the UK while introducing a region of France in depth and exploring sites connected to the Second World War.

Pastoral Support

The British Section is committed to nurturing each pupil's personal development and promoting their well-being as a means to academic success and reflecting the Section's core belief in child-centred learning. This requires coordination with French colleagues, both those on site and in *externé* schools.

In Secondary, there is a structured system of Site and Pastoral Coordinators and Section Tutors who formulate and implement support strategies. In *maternelle* and Primary, the emphasis is on creating happy and secure environments, working on an individual basis to understand each child's potential, and creating a strong home-school partnership.

Beyond the Classroom

The British Section offers a range of extracurricular opportunities to create a genuinely British-style education. They also help to foster a sense of belonging and bring together full-time and *externé* pupils.

There are various opportunities for music and drama in Primary, some of them integrated into teaching, others offered on an extracurricular basis. A Christmas pantomime and annual plays have become traditions.

Sports are run by a team of volunteer parents, with football and netball the most popular. Girls' and boys' football teams at all age levels compete against other international section teams, including in an annual primary tournament, *Tournoi des Etolies*. Teams are open to all students, whether full-time or *externé*.

There is an active schedule of visiting speakers and an expanding enrichment programme, including pottery visits, forest school, art projects and engagement with UK events such as World Book Day and National Storytelling Week.

The British Section

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Governance

While the Lycée International is a French state institution, each international section is a separately governed entity, funded either by fees, as in the case of the British Section, or by a government or embassy.

The British Section is governed by the British Section Parents' Association (BSPA), a French non-profit organisation. Under French law, all parents with children in the Section – full-time or *externé* – are members of the BSPA. The Association elects a Board of parent governors, who are joined by a former British school Headteacher to contribute educational expertise.

The Governing Board (*Conseil d'Administration de l'Association des Parents d'Élèves de la Section Britannique du Lycée International*) oversees the management of the Section's affairs by the Director and Senior Leadership Team, with a focus on finance, HR and strategy. British Section staff are employed and remunerated by the BSPA, although all appointments require approval from French authorities.

History

The Lycée International was created in the 1950s for military families at the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe. Its founding principle was to combine education in French with teaching in another language of the NATO nations. The Château d'Hennemont thus became an international primary school – a role which it continued to fulfil until the early 1990s.

When SHAPE left France, the school was reorganised as a state lycée (senior school) for the children of expatriates and local French children with the potential and motivation to become bilingual. In addition to the founding sections, German and Dutch, further sections were restored or created, including the British Section in 1968. The newest is the Chinese Section, established in 2016.

The partner school network started in the 1970s when demand for full-time places in the Lycée exceeded the space available. The British Section started working with partner schools in the early 80s.

The Lycée International was one of the first schools to offer the IB Diploma. This lasted until the French Government developed its own international version of the French Baccalaureate – the *Baccalauréat Français International (BFI)*, formerly the *Option Internationale du Baccalauréat (OIB)*. All 14 sections now offer the BFI, which acts as a unifying force within the school; the Lycée is France's principal BFI examination centre.



The Role

Head of Primary in the British Section is no ordinary leadership role. To be successful will require more than adaptability to a different environment; the successful candidate must be able to set aside their expectations and the experience gained in other leadership positions and to conceive of leadership within a very different context. A good leadership track record will be essential; knowing how to use that experience will be even more important. Some leaders would find this frustrating; the next Head of Primary will need to be excited by it.

The British Section is seeking a leader who can balance strong pedagogical thinking with organisational and strategic leadership and support the Early Years and Primary to move into a new phase of development. They will also join the Senior Leadership Team, contributing to Section-wide strategy and whole-school responses to challenges and opportunities. Working alongside Secondary leadership will provide an opportunity to foster closer collaboration across the Section.

The major challenge for the Head of Primary is also the opportunity: to embrace the context and to use it to nurture a different type of community and craft an innovative and distinctive approach to primary education.

The Head of Primary must be able to provide first-class pedagogical and curriculum leadership. They will require a successful track record in leading EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2, but also a deep commitment to bilingual and bicultural education and a curiosity about how a British curriculum and pedagogy can be delivered alongside the contrasting approaches of French education. Ideally, they will be experienced in the teaching *of* English, not just *in* English, and at the very least, they will grasp the unique way in which teaching and learning take place in the Section and the Lycée. They will continually seek ways to embed English learning in the day-to-day life of every pupil, even when most of the subject teaching will be in French. There is much to explore to enable the Section to become an even more vibrant environment for teaching and learning and to foster an even greater sense of belonging.

The British Section's aim is that all its students – whether full-time members of the Lycée International, *externés*, or in partner schools – should feel a sense of belonging. This is likely to require different thinking to that which candidates have encountered previously. It could encompass using time and space in new ways, strengthening the relationship between Primary and Secondary, making more of opportunities across the Lycée, or engaging with families in novel ways.

The Board and the Director are committed to building on the British Section's fine reputation, earned over almost 60 years, so that it can continue to be a pioneer and an innovator in bilingual education. The Head of Primary must therefore be enthusiastic about partnering with James Cathcart and other SLT members in pursuit of the British Section's vision and to develop its influence in the Lycée International, within British and anglophone education in the French-speaking world, and more generally in bilingual education.

The Role

The Head of Primary should be a good communicator externally, prepared to be an ambassador for the Section – in the expatriate community, within diplomatic circles, with partner schools and more widely in the community. Parental engagement needs to be carefully considered. Parents have diverse expectations that can depend on whether they are long-term residents of France, have recently arrived from the UK, or are accustomed to international schools elsewhere. The Head of Primary should have the curiosity, tact and patience to work with these differing expectations, as well as the skills and personality to reassure, to inspire and to persuade.

Pastoral support and well-being, safeguarding, and SEND provision can all become more complex when pupils are not in the Section all the time. Nevertheless, parents rightly expect there to be an understanding of individual needs. Extra vigilance is required in relation to well-being and safeguarding, along with a willingness to work with those who see pupils in different contexts. It would be an advantage for the Head of Primary to have a strong understanding of SEND frameworks so that they can be resourceful in considering where Primary can most effectively target support.

There is a contradiction at the heart of Primary. It has 345 pupils and great potential for impact and institutional influence. But the staff is small – 16 teachers and teaching assistants. The British Section punches above its weight proportionate to its teacher numbers. It is a very committed Primary staff, and some teachers have been with the Section for many years. As the Section develops and new initiatives and approaches are introduced, the team will need inspiring, supportive, and reassuring leadership to help them embrace change. Credibility will be essential, balanced by listening and humility: colleagues will want to feel confident that the Head of Primary has the experience, skills and mindset to provide the leadership they require, but will also respect what has been achieved to date and listen to their ideas.



The Role



Existing proficiency in French is not a prerequisite. However, it would be a significant advantage in order to understand the bilingual and bicultural education the Lycée provides, to work with French colleagues across the school, and to communicate effectively with French speakers in families. It will also be helpful in modelling the expectations and behaviours expected of the students.

The successful candidate may well have a track record of adapting to different types of schools – to demonstrate their openness of mind and to give them confidence about their ability to change again to such a different environment.

Candidates will also need to be able to demonstrate resourcefulness and resilience, commitment, innovative pedagogical thinking, the ability to lead change, and an openness to doing things differently. They should be ready to respect and value Susan Woodward's achievements during her years of leadership and to listen to the community before making hasty judgements about what will and will not work.

This is a position of great potential and an exceptional opportunity – but, even more than is often the case, that will only hold true for the right candidate.

The Head of Primary position is available from August 2026. However, a January start would also be possible for a very strong candidate.



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Job Description

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The Head of Primary is responsible for defining and delivering the British Section's vision for Early Years and Primary education, ensuring consistently high standards and excellent pupil outcomes. As a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the postholder contributes to whole-section strategy and leads with integrity, clarity and ambition for every child.

The Head of Primary reports to the Director of the British Section.

Key Responsibilities

Leadership and Management

- Within the framework of the British Section's Aims, Values and Continuous Improvement Plan, define and implement a clear and compelling vision for Early Years and Primary education.
- Lead by example and uphold the values of the British Section.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to develop coherent, evidence-informed plans that support pupil progress, staff effectiveness and overall departmental improvement.
- Maintain a strong understanding of relevant educational research and use data and evidence to guide departmental decisions and plans.
- Contribute to whole-section strategic planning.
- Seek and engage in appropriate continuing professional development and actively encourage a culture of professional growth among staff.

Teaching and Learning

- Ensure learning and pupil well-being are central to all departmental activity and that the curriculum, schemes of work, assessment practices and teaching strategies remain relevant, effective and consistently applied.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, implementing improvement strategies where needed.
- Promote high expectations and achievement for all pupils, ensuring that individual learning and pastoral needs, including SEND, are identified early and supported appropriately.
- Champion the effective use of technology to support learning.
- Ensure clear, accurate and timely reporting to parents, consistent with the procedures of the French host schools.
- Work effectively with Secondary colleagues to support smooth transitions across academic phases.
- Identify resource needs and manage the Primary Department's annual budget.
- Develop and promote extracurricular opportunities that enrich pupils' experience and support the British Section's aims and values.

Job Description

People and Culture

- Foster a positive, collaborative and professional team culture, modelling high expectations and reinforcing a strong sense of community within the Primary Department and the wider British Section.
- Work with the Director on the structure, recruitment and deployment of teaching and support staff.
- Ensure productive and effective teamwork and lead robust processes for staff induction, performance standards, continuing professional development and self-evaluation.
- Provide coaching, guidance, motivation and, when necessary, appropriate corrective action to ensure high professional performance.
- Ensure a safe, inclusive and equitable learning environment where all pupils and staff feel valued.

Policies and Procedures

- Develop, implement and evaluate policies that support the British Section's aims and strategic priorities.
- Ensure the Department complies with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Manage Primary admissions in collaboration with the Admissions Officer, host schools and the British Section Director.
- Ensure the smooth daily management of the Primary Department.
- Ensure robust safeguarding practice in line with British Section procedures and both UK and French expectations.
- Ensure appropriate cover arrangements during Primary staff absences.

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

- Build strong and constructive relationships across the Lycée International network and with partner schools.
- Maintain excellent communication with parents and contribute to the development of effective home-school partnerships.
- Prepare professional reports as required by the Director.
- Promote the British Section within the wider community.



Person Specification

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The new Head of Primary will be a dynamic leader with:

- Relevant teaching and leadership experience, from EYFS through to Upper Primary.
- A secure and up-to-date understanding of educational research, effective pedagogy and how children learn.
- The ability to analyse, interpret and use pupil data to support high levels of progress.
- A strong understanding of safeguarding so that good practice can be assured in the British Section's distinctive context.
- A successful track record in leading colleagues and enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and pastoral provision.
- Cultural awareness and adaptability, suited to an international context.
- Excellent classroom practice and effective use of IT.
- An understanding of bilingual or multilingual learners (advantageous).

Personal Qualities and Competencies

- A positive, optimistic approach and a commitment to self-evaluation and continuous improvement.
- The ability to build confidence and trust in pupils, colleagues and parents and to work instinctively and effectively with children.
- Strong interpersonal skills enabling effective relationships with colleagues, families and external agencies.
- The ability to motivate, inspire and support others.
- Good judgement, including the ability to listen, reflect and consider evidence and advice before making decisions.
- The ability to manage a substantial workload in a complex international environment with calmness, efficiency and attention to detail.
- Willingness to work beyond normal hours when necessary.
- A desire to contribute actively to the wider life of the British Section and partner schools.
- If not already proficient, a willingness to work towards functional fluency in French.



Remuneration

- Highly competitive salary, aligned with qualifications and experience.
- Relocation assistance, including removal expenses and contributions towards French language tuition.
- Full-time, permanent French contract (CDI), including contributions to state and supplementary pension schemes.
- The children of teaching staff may be enrolled in the school if they meet the academic conditions of entry.

The British Section is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. All appointments are subject to DBS/*casier judiciaire* (France) checks.





How to Apply

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This recruitment process is being managed by RSAcademics on behalf of The British Section Parents' Association. Unless indicated otherwise, all communication about the appointment will be via RSAcademics.

Two members of the RSAcademics team are primarily engaged in this process:

- Keith Clark, Head of International Leadership Appointments:
keithclark@rsacademics.com
- Jean Sullivan, Head of International Search:
jeansullivan@rsacademics.com

Interested candidates are invited to contact Jean Sullivan for an initial confidential discussion, including a copy of your CV/résumé.

Closing date: Thursday 7 May 2026 at 10:00 (UK) / 11:00 (France).

Please apply at www.rsacademics.com via the Apply Now link accompanying the announcement of the position.

To apply, candidates should complete an application form and submit it electronically to RSAcademics, together with a letter of application, data-sharing consent form and CV/résumé. Please make sure your letter, addressed to James Cathcart, Director, British Section, is tailored to this role; an application letter that is largely generic is discouraged and may lead to your application not being considered.

Should you have any queries relating to uploading your application documents, please contact:

- Amy Murphy, Operations Administrator:
applications@rsacademics.com / +44 (0) 204 6269 791

The recruitment process will proceed as follows:

- All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement within two working days, please contact RSAcademics by telephone (+44 (0) 204 6269 791).
- **Preliminary interviews** (by video call with RSAcademics colleagues) will take place in the week commencing 11 May 2026.
- **Longlist interviews** will take place in the week commencing 25 May 2026.
- **Final interviews** are likely to take place at the Lycée International in the week commencing 1 June 2026.
- RSAcademics will collect references for candidates invited to attend the final stage. No referees will be contacted until RSAcademics has received your express permission to do so.

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 firsthand 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