

Head of Highclare Preparatory School

CANDIDATE INFORMATION



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the post of Head Highclare Preparatory School which becomes available in January 2025, following Mrs. Polly Bennett's very successful nine years' tenure.

The Governors are seeking able and imaginative candidates with middle or senior leadership experience in a primary education setting. Experience working with children aged 2-11 in an all-through school is an advantage,

At Highclare, we have been pursuing our clear vision and purpose for over 90 years. Our philosophy goes much further than educational excellence and the Head and the staff work tirelessly with both students and parents to equip young people with the skills to meet the challenges and joys of modern society and adulthood.

We pride ourselves on the special atmosphere of co-operation which exists within the School and which is evident in the relationships between the Board of Governors, the Head and teaching staff and the staff and pupils. Staff turnover is low and the teaching staff have an exceptional level of personal commitment, helping to create a nurturing School with a tangibly purposeful, friendly and happy environment.

The Head of the Preparatory School will work across two Prep and Pre-Prep Sites and in close liaison with the Head. A highly effective Leader, the person will demonstrate the knowledge, skill, ability, and passion to lead Highclare Preparatory School through the next exciting phase, being able to inspire others with a vision for the future.

If this is a role which excites you and you feel you have the requisite skills and experience, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Mrs Louise Flowith
Chair of Governors

Miss Francine Smith
Head





History & Overview

Highclare School is an Independent Day School and a non-profit making charitable trust, supervised by a Board of Governors, providing education to boys and girls from 2+ years to 18 years. It is a leading provider of independent education in the North Birmingham and Staffordshire areas and has a catchment which includes Sutton Coldfield, Coleshill, Lichfield, Walsall, Aldridge and Tamworth as well as the wider Birmingham and Staffordshire area.

The School currently operates a Senior School and two parallel Prep schools, all on separate sites. There is also a separate sports field which is used by the whole school community. The two Prep schools are under the leadership of one Head of Prep School who reports to the Head of the School. Each of the three Schools is small enough to create a warm and friendly family atmosphere.

Established in 1932 at premises on Birmingham Road, Sutton Coldfield (now called Highclare Woodfield - one of the two Prep schools), Highclare has enjoyed a sustained increase in numbers during the last 30 years. There are approximately 530 pupils on the register, of whom around 220 are in the Senior School, 230 are in the Prep School and 80 in the Pre-prep. There are around 30 in the Sixth Form.

Academic scholarships and additional specialist scholarships may be awarded to pupils showing a particular talent. A limited number of bursaries are also offered based on financial needs.

The School is non-denominational with a broadly Christian ethos in which self-respect, self-discipline, tolerance and consideration for others are encouraged. The school roll is diverse and reflective of the demographic characteristics which exist in the West Midlands region.

Highclare has a clear vision and purpose and for over 90 years has been pursuing its policy of encouraging pupils to achieve their full potential within a stimulating academic environment. The Highclare philosophy goes much further than educational excellence and the Head and the staff work tirelessly with both students and parents to equip young people to cope with the challenges and joys of modern society and adulthood. The personal attention and encouragement they receive, in combination with the personal skills they acquire, are crucial in developing confident and articulate individuals, who are good team players and who are well prepared for life beyond school.

Alongside this philosophy, the School's focus continues to be on the following:

- academic achievement through a learning curriculum that is broad and balanced and kept constantly under review;
- the widening of access to the education provided by the School;
- enhancing the use of technology in teaching;
- improving the School's facilities and access to them by the local community. Over the past few years there has been extensive refurbishment to continue a rolling programme of essential upgrading of the internal and external infrastructure of all school buildings, including external and internal refurbishment and decoration at the three School locations plus the Sports Field and Pavilion.



LOCATIONS & FACILITIES

The School occupies four sites including a sports field. Each school site has its own distinctive character, and all are united by coordinated and collaborative governance, leadership and purpose.

■ **Highclare Senior School** in Erdington, for children aged 11 - 18

Highclare Senior School in Erdington, five miles north of central Birmingham, was a former Benedictine monastery and is situated in six acres of grounds. Erdington is in close proximity to both major road and rail interchanges and is, therefore, easily accessible to the rest of the country.

The original Victorian Gothic buildings form the centre of the School and additional buildings provide excellent facilities for the Arts, Sciences, Sports and Information Technology. These premises were acquired by Highclare School in 1994, following an extensive search of the local area. Over the years, improvement programmes have facilitated the development of co-education and expansion of the Sixth Form.

■ **Highclare School, Woodfield** in Sutton Coldfield, for children aged 2+ - 11

Highclare Woodfield is the site of the original School and, following the acquisition of the Highclare Senior School buildings in 1994, it now houses a co-educational Pre-Prep and Prep School. In January 2002 the facilities at this site were significantly enhanced by the acquisition of an adjacent independent school. It is located in Sutton Coldfield which lies around eight miles north east of Birmingham city centre, nine miles south of Lichfield and seven miles southwest of Tamworth.

■ **Highclare School, St Paul's** in Sutton Coldfield, for children aged 2+ - 11

Highclare St Paul's was once the former St Paul's Convent, the home of the Sisters of the Charity of St Paul the Apostle, who ran an independent co-educational Junior School on the site. It was acquired by Highclare School in 1998 and is situated on the Four Oaks and Little Aston side of Sutton Coldfield. It houses a co-educational Pre-Prep and Prep School.



Sport, the Arts & Extra-curricular Activities

SPORT

Highclare encourages high levels of performance from its pupils in a wide range of sports, including netball, hockey, swimming, athletics, cross country, gymnastics, cricket, rugby and football for girls and boys. The School's Sports Field is used weekly in the double lessons for football and rugby and more recently for cricket in September and October, making use of the Astroturf wicket. Swimming is taught at the Erdington Leisure centre. Highclare teams regularly take part in regional and national independent schools' competitions as well as participating in the local Birmingham and Sutton schools' competitions which frequently produce notable successes.

The Senior School has recently forged an exciting partnership with Aston Villa Football Club; 20 boys from their elite player performance programme have joined the school to continue their academic studies to GCSE alongside the Aston Villa programme.

MUSIC & DRAMA

The Music and Drama Departments join together on a regular basis to deliver performances in concerts, the annual carol service and dramatic productions. Participation is encouraged in a wide range of ensembles, choirs, orchestras and wind band and a large number of pupils maintain their progress by having lessons with the numerous visiting music teachers. LAMDA and debating are extremely popular activities, which allow pupils to grow in confidence and develop their individuality.

ART

Art is a popular academic subject and recreational activity for many pupils. In the annual regional ISA art competition the School regularly enjoys success across a wide range of mediums.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY

Throughout the year, both the Senior and Preparatory Schools provide a vast range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activity including exciting residential visits. All staff are expected to contribute to the co-curricular programme.

These many activities (around 30 are offered each week on all sites) complement the learning through the curriculum and enrich personal development. This is what makes Highclare stand out, giving opportunities to pupils to learn important skills such as leadership, time management, teamwork, persistence and to grow in both self-confidence and self-assurance.



Preparatory School Life

ONE SCHOOL, TWO SITES

The Preparatory School runs as one school across two sites. The curriculum, policies, standards and opportunities offered are mirrored in each location with educational visits, sports fixtures, class assemblies all being collaborative. Staff across sites meet regularly with their counterparts and the current arrangements are that the Head of Preparatory spends 2.5 days at each site (and the Deputy Head does likewise so there is a senior leader on each site every day).

The School was inspected by ISI in April 2023 and was found to be excellent in both the quality of pupil's academic and other achievements and in the quality of pupils' personal development. They commented that "pupils throughout the school display strongly positive attitudes to learning, both individually and collaboratively." "Prep school pupils demonstrate excellent study skills."

Locally there are a number of selective state grammar schools and the majority of pupils sit the 11+ examination with a view to taking up a grammar school place. A 'whole school, one school' ethos is being strongly embedded by the new Head with a view that more pupils will move from Y6 to Y7 in the Senior School.

PRE PREPARATORY

The Pre-Preparatory School runs with extremely high expectations both academically and pastorally. With quality educational input being delivered daily by highly skilled and experienced practitioners, the children learn in a variety of ways that develop curiosity, imagination and questioning alongside the traditional values such as reading and writing.

ACADEMIC

Our whole school 'Take Charge' initiative encourages independence and resilience amongst even our youngest pupils. With no national testing taking place within the Prep School (PIRA and PUMA currently used), the exciting yet challenge curriculum enables the teacher to teach to the needs of the children. There is a huge emphasis put on the important basics such as handwriting, reading and timetables alongside the application of these in vibrant and holistic lessons. We have extremely high academic standard and believe that each child can reach their potential in our school.

PASTORAL

Our pastoral care is of the highest quality. Our open door policy ensures that all staff are visible throughout the day with senior leaders being present for parents at key points throughout the day. We know our families inside out and have excellent relationships with these. We pride ourselves on the genuine family/community feel that the Prep School has. Our behavioural expectations are extremely high and we believe in a positive behaviour approach with reflections taking place if our expectations are not met.

Our School dog, Patsy is an important member of the community and is on-site every day to support wellbeing.

EXTRA CURRICULAR

Our extra-curricular programme is a huge strength with all teaching staff and leaders leading at least one hour's offering per week. This programme is shaped by pupil voice and thoroughly enjoyed by our pupils.



School & The Community



Highclare has an on-going commitment to encourage all pupils of every age to engage (at appropriate levels) in community involvement. The School aims to instil a sense of pride in pupils in serving the community and having a positive impact in the wider world. Pupils, parents and staff participate in many varied activities as part of community and charitable links for both local and national charities, such as singing with the school choirs, bag packing in local supermarkets, bring-and-buy sales, cake sales and sponsored events. The School's community responsibility also extends further afield with support given to various projects.

Charity plays a huge part in both the Senior and Prep Schools. The charities chosen by the Student Councils on each site last year were Shoe Aid, St Basils (supporting young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness), TAWS (The Active Wellbeing Society) and the Erdington Foodbank. During the year the School raised over £10,000.

The School runs competitions in art and creative writing for local primary schools which attract hundreds of entries. Neighbouring primary schools and local sporting teams enjoy the use of the School's recreational facilities at both the Senior School and Highclare Sports Field. The Church next door is able to use the car park every weekend for its congregation and a local ballet school uses the Senior School hall on a weekly basis.

The Governors have considered their response to the change to the law, as embodied in the Charities Act 2011, requiring that public benefit can no longer be presumed but must be demonstrated. In addition, they have paid due regard to Charity Commission guidance on the subject. The Governors consider that these wider involvements and contributions to the community clearly demonstrate that greater public benefit requirements are being met.

The 'Friends of Highclare School' plays a very important part in the School, organising events for the children and parents and raising funds for the School. They are a committed and dedicated group of parents who aim to provide the best they can for the School. They also operate a second-hand school uniform shop.

Governance & Leadership

Highclare School has a very supportive Board of Governors who determine the strategy and general policies of the School and meet as a Board at least ten times a year. They are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils and the new Head must ensure that the highest priority is given to following guidance and regulations to safeguard children and young people.

Governors are familiar with the aims, objectives and practical operation of the School, usually either by being parents or grandparents of children who are currently being educated at the School or having had children attend the School in the past. Governors undertake training as and when required appropriate to their specific needs and responsibilities.

The implementation of strategy, together with the day-to-day management of the School, is delegated to the Head and the Senior Leadership Team. The current Head is supported by a strong Senior Leadership Team, comprising the Deputy Heads of the Senior School, Head and Deputy Head of the Prep Schools, the Business Manager and the DSL. This Team is a strategic and policy making body. The day-to-day operational management of the three sites is undertaken by the Head and her management team.

Finance

The school is in a good financial position as a result of careful stewardship over a number of years. There has been a surplus generated for the past seven years. Fees are around the average for the area.



The Head of the Preparatory School is part of the Senior Leadership Team alongside the Head, Deputy Heads of Senior School (pastoral and academic) and Preparatory School, DSL and School Business Manager. The Preparatory School Head leads the Primary Committee.

Currently, the Head and Deputy Head of the Preparatory School alternate sites for 2.5 days per week, ensuring the Head is a presence across the School every week.

Key responsibilities of the role include:

■ Leadership

- Inspire and champion the vision and strategy for the education of all pupils at Highclare Preparatory School.
- Be a role model, motivate and inspire pupils, staff and parents to aim high and to achieve success.
- Maintain the high standards of scrutiny currently in place with regard to all aspects of safeguarding within the Preparatory School.
- Promote the Highclare ethos to achieve the stated aims:
 - ◊ To provide high quality teaching and to encourage independent learning and individual excellence within a secure and happy environment.
 - ◊ To motivate each learner to achieve his / her full all- round potential.
 - ◊ To develop the values of self-respect and self-discipline, alongside tolerance and respect for others and the environment.
- Maintain excellent engagement with parents, prospective parents, alumnae, the local community and others for the development and promotion of Highclare School.

■ Educational Excellence and Pastoral Care

- Give leadership, inspiring the highest quality teaching and learning to achieve excellent academic results.
- Ensure the curriculum, timetable and academic organisation of the Preparatory School support the academic goals.
- Maintain the exceptional standards of pastoral care which recognise the needs of the individual and offer appropriate support and encouragement.
- Liaising closely with the SENDCo to ensure children with learning difficulties are identified and supported both in and out of mainstream lessons as appropriate.
- Foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and support between staff.
- Ensure a high standard of behaviour and discipline is maintained across the Preparatory School.
- Maintain the culture within the School which respects the beliefs and views of others through the continuing development of personal, moral and ethical values and enable pupils to take their place within society and lead fulfilling lives, in which diversity is celebrated and personal character is valued.
- Keep abreast of current educational and pastoral requirements, including for EYFS.

■ Organisational Leadership

- Ensure that the School complies with all relevant statutory legislation and regulatory requirements, as specified by the Department for Education, the Independent Schools Inspectorate and other relevant bodies, including for EYFS.
- Ensure the continuing high standing of the Preparatory School's reputation and accountability for ensuring that parents are kept informed of the progress of their children, the curriculum and other matters relating to teaching and learning at the School.

- Promote Highclare School as one school, ensuring that the transition from Pre-Prep to Reception and Y6 to Y7 are promoted as the expectation.
- Lead on the appointment of Preparatory School staff to maintain a high performing team.
- Motivate, support and enable staff to carry out their respective roles to the highest standard.
- Support an environment of encouragement and delegation in which colleagues are enabled and expected to perform well, seeking further responsibility, advancement and continuous professional development.
- Maintain strong links with parents and families of pupils, promote 'open door' policy which welcomes parental support.
- Liaise with the Friends of Highclare School as appropriate to support and promote their initiatives.

■ Staff Benefits

- A competitive salary with a pension scheme (defined contribution scheme)
- Professional development opportunities, including a generous and supportive CPD policy
- Small class sizes and high standards of pupil behaviour
- The opportunity for an innovative and creative teaching and learning environment without the pressures of national testing
- Supportive colleagues and SLT
- Generous fee discount for staff children
- Free flu vaccines
- Long service recognition
- Salary sacrifice Cycle to Work scheme



The Person

It is expected that the Head of Highclare Preparatory School will be an inspirational and innovative leader who can secure the full engagement of staff and all other parties in the delivery of the School's strategic aims. The successful candidate will have the following key skills, experience and attributes:

■ Leadership

- Dynamic leadership to ensure that Highclare Preparatory School continues to thrive.
- Excellent communication skills with ability and confidence to work effectively at all levels.
- Leadership in the recruitment of pupils.
- An openness to new ideas and an ability to lead and inspire others through periods of change.
- Leadership in promoting values of diversity, equality and inclusion.

■ Academic and Pastoral Care

- An excellent teaching record with experience in senior leadership of a primary/prep school. Experience of EYFS is an advantage.
- A strong interest in promoting academic excellence in pupils and staff.
- A commitment to the already very high standards of pastoral care.
- A commitment to putting pupil welfare and safeguarding at the heart of the school.
- An understanding of the characteristics of an effective and successful preparatory school and ways in which performance can be improved.
- An understanding of the use of best practice in ensuring good behaviour and discipline.
- A willingness and enthusiasm to promote support a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sports, music and arts

■ Managerial

- The ability to work with the Head, SLT, staff team and the Governing Body to achieve the School's aims.
- Business and financial acumen with some understanding of the importance of strategic and financial planning and marketing.
- The ability to manage staff effectively and efficiently.
- The ability to use ICT and emerging technologies to enhance education.
- A good understanding of all elements of an independent preparatory school environment and current and future issues to be faced.
- An understanding of health & safety, welfare and safeguarding.

■ Characteristics

- Intelligence with good interpersonal skills.
- The ability to embrace opportunity and have a focus on the future.
- Excellent public speaking skills with ability to communicate well.
- Approachability and an ease with people from a wide range of backgrounds.
- The ability to consult and yet remain decisive.
- Enthusiasm, with a capacity for hard work, combined with a sense of humour.
- Resilience and emotional maturity when faced with the demands of the job.

■ Qualifications

It is expected that the successful candidate will:

- Hold a good honours degree with any management and leadership qualification an advantage.
- Have qualified teacher status.
- Have evidence of continuing professional development which prepares for this post.
- Demonstrate a range of interests and achievements.



Application Process

- All applications must be made on the School's application form which can be downloaded from [here](#)
- CVs will not be accepted.
- A covering letter of no more than two sides of A4 may accompany the application and should be addressed to the Head, Miss Francine Smith.
- The closing date for applications is **12 noon on Friday 7 June 2024**
- Completed applications should be returned to HR@highclareschool.co.uk
- Interviews are likely to take place at the end of the week commencing 10 June 2024 at Highclare School
- A full tour of both Preparatory School sites will form part of the interview process and therefore interested candidates do not need to arrange a visit beforehand. More information about our sites is available on the School website
- If you would like to have an informal conversation about the position prior to applying, you can contact Ann Newnham, PA to the Head on headsecretary@highclareschool.co.uk

Highclare School is committed to creating and promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the community we are part of. Applications are welcome from all suitably qualified candidates regardless of ethnicity, gender, age or disability. We welcome applications from underrepresented groups.

The School 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, including referencing checks and an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).