



BERKHAMSTED

— 1541 —

Saxton Bampfylde



## Appointment of Principal

AIM HIGH WITH INTEGRITY - BE ADVENTUROUS - SERVE OTHERS



# BERKHAMSTED

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## The School



Berkhamsted School is situated in the historic Hertfordshire town of the same name, a prosperous community surrounded by Chiltern countryside and within easy reach of London. Berkhamsted is a leading group of independent schools for pupils aged 3 to 18 years.

Berkhamsted School's history dates back to 1541, when John Incent, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, applied to King Henry VIII for a licence to purchase a piece of land. He was successful and the Boys School was founded.

In 1888 a Girls School was founded in Berkhamsted. With both schools thriving, the decision was taken to merge them in 1996, and together with their respective feeder prep schools, Berkhamsted Collegiate School came into being.



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## The School

In 2011, Heatherton House School, a girls independent day school in Chesham Bois, joined forces and the organisation became the Berkhamsted Schools Group. Operating as a satellite Prep School, Heatherton provides a feed of pupils to Berkhamsted Girls School every year.

In 2012 Berkhamsted Schools Group acquired Haresfoot, a small 3-11 proprietorial school in Berkhamsted, and a restructure of the organisation and the two sites resulted in Berkhamsted Pre-Prep (275 children aged 1-7 on the Haresfoot site) and Berkhamsted Prep (340 aged 7-11) within the town.

Berkhamsted is the only School in the Herts, Beds and Bucks regions, and one of only a small number of schools in the country, to offer a 'diamond' structure that combines the best of both single-sex and co-educational teaching. Boys and girls are taught together until the age of 11 (Berkhamsted Pre-Prep and Prep), separately from the age of 11-16 (Berkhamsted Boys and Berkhamsted Girls), before coming back together again in a joint sixth form (Berkhamsted Sixth).

Berkhamsted's Brand Essence is Developing Remarkable People, Pupils and Colleagues alike.

The School's aim is to maintain good discipline within a relaxed and friendly atmosphere and to encourage the development of responsibility and self-discipline.

Berkhamsted has a reputation for high academic achievement across a broad range of subjects. GCSE and A Level results are impressive, with students gaining entry to Russell Group, and Oxbridge Universities every year, as well as International studies and apprenticeship.

Every part of the Group has been inspected in the last 18 months, and each commended for an area of significant strength, an achievement only celebrated by 11% of Independent Schools.





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At Berkhamsted Pre-Prep and Berkhamsted Prep, pupils spend part of the day with their form teacher, who takes responsibility for both their academic and personal development. Each child's development is closely monitored by the Head of Year. Classes are small so that staff can offer each child as much individual support and attention as they need.

### **Houses:**

Berkhamsted Boys and Girls Schools are composed of smaller units - Houses - where every individual receives pastoral support and academic guidance from a Year Tutor. The 'vertical' houses are the centre of pupils' lives, giving a sense of belonging and encouraging self-confidence. Tutors, supported by their Heads of Houses, take responsibility for each pupil's social and academic development and provide the main channel of communication between home and school.

Berkhamsted opened a new Sixth Form Centre in March 2025. The Sixth Form structure differs from that of the Senior Schools: students are assigned a personal tutor with whom 1-2-1 meetings are timetabled. The Head of Sixth, assisted by a Deputy and three Assistant Heads, Oversee pastoral care, university and careers guidance. The structure and operations of life in the Sixth seek to provide an experience which bridges the Gap between Senior School and University or the workplace.



Berkhamsted School has one girls' (St John's) and one boys' (Incents) boarding house, with circa 60 students in total. The students are fully integrated into the pastoral structure for day pupils. Berkhamsted also offers flexi-boarding to all day pupils, subject to availability.

Houses are also the basis for internal competitions. Sport naturally provides many opportunities for pupils to work together along with music, drama and art competitions and fundraising for charities.



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### **Sport:**

Sport and physical education play a key role in the life of Berkhamsted and a wide variety of activities are provided.

The Group has excellent sports facilities including a 25m indoor heated swimming pool, extensive playing fields covering over 40 acres, an athletics track, all-weather tennis courts, all-weather netball courts, a floodlit 3G pitch, a sports hall, Eton Fives courts, two fitness rooms and a recently refurbished gymnasium.

Major sports for girls are Lacrosse, Netball, Cricket and Tennis, and Rugby, Football, and Cricket for boys. A number of other sports are also pursued including Athletics, Badminton, Cross-Country, Eton Fives, Golf, Horse-riding, Judo, Rowing, Shooting, Squash and Swimming.

Teams and individuals are entered into competitions in many of these events and have achieved notable success both regionally and nationally, with 10 teams winning National Championships in 2023-24. In Lacrosse, Netball and Rugby pupils frequently achieve regional and national representation.

### **Co-curricular programme:**

An extensive co-curricular programme is a fundamental part of life at Berkhamsted and aims to broaden pupils' life experience through a wide range of activities, clubs, societies, sports, courses, performances and visits. During their time in the School, it is expected that every child will have the opportunity to sing, dance, act and compete while also debating and developing a commitment to community service.

A 500-seat theatre provides an excellent venue for school productions (and is much used by the local community) and the historic Chapel is also used for musical performances. Performing arts are strengths of the School, with the Drama department recently shortlisted for a national award.

The CCF, which retains Army, Navy and RAF sections is popular and active. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme attracts very large numbers of pupils. Both are highly successful. Outdoor education is provided to all students at all ages across the Group.



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All members of staff are expected to involve themselves in activities beyond the classroom by coaching or supervising sports and by offering support to CCF, Community Service, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or similar activities.

### **Chapel:**

The Christian foundation at Berkhamsted derives from its founder, John Incent. We are reminded of this foundation by the physical presence of the historic Chapel at the Boys School, the addition of a 'floating Chapel' at the Girls School and the presence of a School Chaplain.

### **Day care:**

Supporting working parents is an important aspect of what Berkhamsted has to offer. The Berkhamsted Day Nursery offers day care for children from 5 months to 4 years, providing the opportunity for parents to work.

Commercial activity at Berkhamsted is strong, with the Berkhamsted Estate, through lettings, filming, productions, and language schools to name a few providing a healthy revenue stream.





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## The School

### **Governing body:**

Berkhamsted Schools Group expects high standards of governance in the conduct of its affairs and has a well-qualified and engaged governing body, which is currently chaired by Carol Copland, a position she has held since 2023.

### **The town of Berkhamsted:**

Berkhamsted has a population of around 18,700. The town centre comprises many listed buildings and a range of specialist shops. In addition, the town has three primary schools and a senior comprehensive school. St Peter's Church sits firmly in the centre of town, with popular restaurants, cafés and a number of supermarkets. The town is attractive to those with young families and staff have the additional bonus of access to all School leisure facilities, including the fitness suite.



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## The Opportunity

The Governors of Berkhamsted Schools Group seek to appoint a new Principal to succeed Richard Backhouse, who leaves in April 2026 following 10 years of transformational leadership.

The Governors wish to recruit an exceptional individual with strategic vision, commercial acumen, and a compelling vision and passion for future education, who will not only build on the School's success to date but will also shape Berkhamsted's future direction. This is an opportunity for someone who will bring ideas and conviction about what Berkhamsted can achieve in the years to come, and who has the strength of character and good judgment to deliver these aspirations. They will work collaboratively with the Governors, Executive and Senior Management Team on the strategy for the Group and will provide clear and inspirational leadership to the whole school community to achieve it.

This is a significant opportunity for an outstanding candidate to lead a forward-thinking Schools Group which has an established reputation for pioneering strategy and practice. Ground-breaking developments across the Group set the tone for a school that has strong reflective practice while maintaining high levels of academic achievement.







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## The Role



This is a role for someone who recognises the power of Berkhamsted's values & ethos and sees real value in the work of the School across many different areas. They will wish to maintain this, whilst being able to create their own vision for the School under their leadership.

The Principal is responsible for the organisation's strategic plan, and for the whole conduct of the School's affairs, particularly for the education, development and safety of all the children entrusted by parents to its care, and for upholding and representing the strong ethos of the School within and outside its community. Working closely with the Executive Committee ("Exec"), the Principal is responsible to the School Governing Body for all academic, financial and estates matters.

### Key responsibilities of the role include:

- providing, in conjunction with the Governing Body, a vision for the future development of the Group;
- ensuring effective teaching and learning, with a focus on excellence in the classroom;



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## The Role

- formulating, communicating and promoting a culture of 'developing remarkable people', among both staff and students;
- providing strong and collaborative leadership to the senior management team to ensure the most effective management of the School community;
- ensuring the recruitment, retention and professional development of all staff in the School;
- maintaining and building on the strong ethos and sense of community within the Group;
- maintaining and developing Berkhamsted's provision of all-round education, ensuring it is the best it can be;
- managing the School and deploying its resources in a cost-effective manner;
- maintaining strong communication and liaison with a range of communities with an interest in the School; this includes Parents, Old Berkhamstedians, Friends, St. Peter's Church and others;
- maintaining the effective working relationship with the Governing Body;
- ensuring effective safeguarding across all areas;
- nurturing the well-established links with the local community; and
- effective marketing of the School and fostering of links with feeder schools.

The Principal is currently supported by the Vice Principal, Chief Operating Officer, Chief People Officer, five Heads of School and their deputies, and the Assistant Vice Principal (External Relations).



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## Person Specification

The ideal candidate is likely to bring all or most of the following:

### **Experience:**

- experience as a School Head who can demonstrate proven experience in the management of a large, complex, and high-profile school or college;
- broad experience of strategic discussions;
- understanding of modern management techniques and styles;
- experience leading and developing teams with a focus on improving performance;
- experience of driving continued improvement in an academic and pastoral context;
- knowledge of best practice in safeguarding;
- experience of providing and marketing holistic education;
- some understanding of modern boarding practice.

### **Skills/Knowledge:**

- an understanding of the challenges facing independent schools in the medium term;
- the ability to look critically at the School and continue its improvement;
- the ability to communicate excellently both in writing with parent and external stakeholders and in person with large and small audiences;
- understanding of what excellence looks like in all areas of school life, including academic, pastoral, financial and safeguarding;
- strong financial understanding and appreciation of rigorous financial management in a school context;
- outstanding classroom practice;
- the ability to maintain a big picture perspective, whilst ensuring detail of execution is outstanding;
- significant evidence of appropriate continuing professional development and knowledge of current education policy and trends; and a willingness to embrace the Old Berkhamstedian community with the knowledge and skills to do this effectively.

### **Qualifications:**

- Strong academic credentials



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## Person Specification

### **Personal attributes:**

- the energy and drive to lead Berkhamsted through the next chapter of its history;
- a strong moral compass and alignment with Berkhamsted's values;
- a collaborative approach to leadership and an interest in building effective teams;
- down to earth approach, with the ability to forge strong relationships with a wide range of people;
- an ability to build a public profile with excellent communication skills, including as a public speaker;
- excellent judgment, with the ability to make decisions quickly;
- a genuine interest in the continued development of the pastoral care at Berkhamsted;
- a strong appreciation of the history of Berkhamsted School, its ethos, traditions and achievements to date;
- an appreciation of Berkhamsted's Christian foundation and the continued important role it plays in the life of the School today;
- an ability to mentor and coach, without personal need to occupy the spotlight;
- an evident interest in developing the life skills of young people and an interest in their welfare; an appreciation of the diverse individuality of teenagers; and
- a good sense of humour and real enjoyment of all aspects of the full lives led by all involved in the School community.



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## Terms of Appointment

The School will offer a competitive salary and generous benefits to reflect the candidate's qualifications and experience. The Principal's salary is normally subject to annual review.

An attractive and substantial house befitting this prestigious appointment is provided as part of the package. The Principal is required to live in accommodation provided by the School during term time. The appointment will be subject to satisfactory references, a satisfactory medical examination and a successful enhanced DBS check.

The School offers an attractive Defined Contribution Pension Scheme.



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## Safeguarding and Child Protection

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and visitors to adopt a child centred and coordinated approach to child protection and safeguarding. The successful applicant will be required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure check by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Berkhamsted Schools Group is a registered charity dedicated to education: 310630.

A copy of the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy can be found [HERE](#)





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## How to apply and Next Steps

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Berkhamsted Schools Group on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through the Saxton Bampfylde website at [www.saxbam.com/appointments](http://www.saxbam.com/appointments) using code TBTDA

**The deadline for receipt of the application is noon on Monday 5 May 2025.**

**Start date: September 2026**

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions. Please enclose with your application:

- the completed application form
- a full CV;
- a covering letter, addressed to Carol Copland, Chair of Governors, of not more than two pages (total); and
- daytime, evening and/or mobile telephone numbers (to be used with discretion).

Applications from all groups are warmly welcomed.

We would be grateful if you could inform us, in your application, of any difficulties with the dates of the interview process.





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## How to apply and Next Steps

It is anticipated that following a review of applications by the Selection Panel in May, selected candidates will be invited to meet with Saxton Bampfylde during the last week of May for initial interviews. Candidates not being taken forward will also be notified.

The Selection Committee will carry out a first round of interviews for shortlisted candidates in early June. Written references will also be taken up at this point in the process, but not without prior discussion with candidates.

A final short list of candidates will then be taken forward for a final interview process; this group may be asked to take part in psychometric testing. These candidates will then be invited to the School; the agenda for these days will include a tour of the site, informal meetings with the current Principal and members of the Executive Team, a tour of the Berkhamsted Schools Group and an invitation to join governors for dinner. Overnight accommodation will be provided.







*Developing Remarkable People*

 [berkhamsted.com](http://berkhamsted.com)

