

Saxton Bampfylde



Sherborne Schools Group

Appointment of Chief Operating Officer

TBUWB



# About

Sherborne Schools Group (SSG) offers a unique educational experience for girls and boys aged 3 to 19, spanning both day and boarding provision.

The Group was established in 2024 following the merger of Sherborne Girls and Sherborne Boys, creating a family of four schools: Sherborne Girls, Sherborne Boys, Sherborne Prep, and Hanford Prep.

SSG also comprises Sherborne International, offering short courses to UK and international pupils, and several wholly owned trading companies. Together, the schools provide a cohesive educational journey across the beautiful Dorset town of Sherborne and nearby Hanford.

Each school retains its distinctive character and heritage, with extensive facilities and grounds, while benefiting from the strengths and opportunities of belonging to a larger Group. The estate in total is 170 acres.

SSG in the UK educates 1,280 pupils, employs 1,000 staff, and generates an income of over £50m.

The Group also includes Sherborne Schools Worldwide, a joint venture launched in 2017, now with six schools in Qatar and Jeddah, and a further school opening in Riyadh in 2026.

The creation of SSG was a strategic move to harness greater possibilities for pupils and staff: shared resources, enhanced facilities, richer collaboration, and a broader educational offering.

Since then, the Board and Group Executive Committee have refined their long-term ambition, setting out three strategic goals. These are to:

- deliver a transformational education;
- ensure financial resilience and growth; and
- develop and enhance our community culture.

Central to achieving these goals is our aspiration to be recognised as the leading, must-consider group of schools for our transformative education, expressed through The Sherborne Difference.

Core to The Sherborne Difference is our commitment to the personal development of each pupil and encouraging them to make a positive contribution to society, both at and beyond school.

These are already key principles that underpin our educational philosophy across the Group, ensuring our pupils develop the character and disposition to be able to navigate and contribute positively to a rapidly changing world.

# The Sherborne Difference

Sherborne Schools Group aspires to deliver a forward-thinking, transformative education that balances rich tradition with bold innovation. Grounded in academic excellence, character development, wellbeing and creativity, our aim is to prepare pupils not only to succeed, but to shape the future as leaders, innovators, and changemakers in a global context.

Our vision is brought to life through five strategic pillars: Character & Leadership, Academics & Futures, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Partnership & Community, and Sustainability & Humanity. These priorities guide our daily practice and long-term ambitions, helping pupils develop resilience, ethical awareness, and the skills to solve complex challenges.

We seek to embed leadership and wellbeing across school life, weaving character education into academics, co-curricular activities, and boarding. Our Separate Yet Together model enhances social and interpersonal learning while retaining the benefits of single-sex education.

Academically, we aim to offer personalised pathways, interdisciplinary curricula, and digital fluency, supported by career readiness initiatives that prepare pupils to thrive in a fast-changing world. Innovation and entrepreneurship are key priorities, with scaffolded programmes, student ventures, and industry partnerships being designed to foster creativity and real-world application.

Through ambitious collaborations, we aspire for pupils to engage in meaningful service, mentorship, and transformative projects. By integrating sustainability, ethical leadership, and global citizenship across learning, we prepare them to confront the world's most pressing challenges with courage and conviction.

Supported by talented staff, integrated systems, and a culture of collaboration, Sherborne Schools Group strives to set the benchmark in transformative education, nurturing globally-minded, confident, and socially responsible leaders ready to define the 21st century.



# Group Structure

## The Schools

### Sherborne Boys – Head Simon Heard

Founded by King Edward VI in 1550, Sherborne Boys is a leading independent full boarding and day school for boys aged 13-18. Sherborne Boys' unique and strong partnership with Sherborne Girls offers the best of both worlds: single-sex education with a vast array of social and co-curricular collaborations. Shirburnians are kind and compassionate yet eager to make their mark on the world. Proud of its nurturing full-boarding environment which is busy yet purposeful; Shirburnians create friendships for life.

### Sherborne Girls – Head Dr Ruth Sullivan

Sherborne Girls is an independent boarding and day school for girls aged 11-18. Founded in 1899, we are proud to be one of the leading full-boarding girls' schools for all-round personal development and academic fulfilment. Our close proximity and unique collaboration with Sherborne Boys offer the best of both worlds: single-sex education alongside a wealth of joint opportunities and social normality.

### Sherborne Prep – Head Annie Gent

Founded in 1858, Sherborne Prep is an independent day and boarding School for boys and girls aged 3-13 years. Sherborne Prep prides itself on its strong community where all pupils are supported to become the best version of themselves. Sherborne Prep sits between Sherborne Boys and Sherborne Girls and benefits from enhanced curriculum and co-curricular links and opportunities.

### Handford Prep – Head Hilary Phillips

Handford Prep is an all girls boarding and day independent prep school set in glorious Dorset countryside where girls are encouraged to find new interests and pursue their passions. Year on year they achieve impressive scholarship results both in the classroom and on the pitches.

The Sherborne Schools Group, through Sherborne Schools Worldwide, has schools in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

## ExCo Structure

The Executive Committee Structure (ExCo) comprises the Heads of the four schools, the Director of External Affairs and the COO. The Head of Hanford reports to the Head of Sherborne Girls, and the Head of Sherborne Prep reports to the Head of Sherborne Boys. The senior school heads, COO and Director of External Affairs report to the Group Chair.

Alongside the Chair is an experienced and dedicated Board of Governors, further information about whom can be found on the schools' websites.

### **The COO has the following Direct Reports:**

- Operations Bursar (Sherborne School/Sherborne Prep)
- Operations Bursar (Sherborne Girls)
- Finance Director
- Director of HR
- Director of Estates
- Director of ICT
- Director of Risk Management
- Business Development Team, including the Director of Short Courses (Sherborne International)
- Executive Assistant to the COO

SSG is more than a group of schools – we are a community cultivating ethical, innovative, and globally-minded leaders prepared to navigate and shape the challenges of the 21st century.

# Key Responsibilities

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is a leadership role within the Group's ExCo. The COO reports and is accountable to the Executive Chair. They will work alongside the Heads of the Group's schools to maintain and develop an outstanding environment within which the pupils and staff of the Group's schools may flourish. As a member of the Executive Committee, as well as being responsible for leading both the Professional Services portfolio and the commercial activities of the Group, the role has a shared corporate responsibility for all aspects of the Group's endeavours, with a particular focus on contributing to and delivering the Group's strategic priorities. The role will have a strong focus on delivery and operationalising the Group's strategy and managing multiple strands of operations across the whole Group.

## **Culture & Leadership**

- To work cooperatively and progressively with Governors and the Executive Committee to encourage a culture of continuous improvement and change across the Group.
- To provide outstanding leadership to Professional Services staff across the Group towards the delivery of exceptional support to the educative and/or other endeavours of the schools.
- Whilst respecting each school's differences, to promote an ethos of professionalism, excellence, and collective endeavour amongst Professional Services staff across all of the Group's schools and Sherborne International.
- To ensure that the Group's resources (human and financial) and infrastructure (estates, facilities, ICT) are optimised in support of the schools' ambitions.
- To exemplify the behaviours and attitude expected of the role in all interactions with staff, parents, pupils and wider society.

## **Strategy & Planning**

- To facilitate both strategic and operational planning processes (aligned with mid- to long-term financial planning) towards the ongoing success of the Group.
- To work with the Executive Team to develop and maintain a suite of timely metrics and performance indicators to aid both Governors and the Executive to monitor Group-wide performance.
- To work with the Executive Team to lead on the delivery of the risk management framework across the Group.
- To ensure that the schools are at all times fully compliant with relevant financial, Health & Safety, employment and other legislation and regulations.



# Key Responsibilities

## Financial Management

- To be responsible to Governors for the long-term financial prosperity of the Group, in order that the schools are able to thrive in their ambition to provide a transformative education for their pupils, and work closely with the Finance Director to oversee this.
- To provide oversight and leadership to the financial management of the Group and its subsidiaries (and their functions), including:
  - To develop and maintain the Financial Model for the Group on multiple planning horizons.
  - To work with colleagues to identify and deliver an ongoing programme of synergies, savings and efficiencies across the Group.
  - To maximise the utilisation of the collective assets and resources available to the Group, rationalising and/or developing/acquiring where appropriate.
  - To work in collaboration with Heads and Professional Services directors to develop and monitor budget submissions (on both annual and longer time horizons) for onward consideration by the Governing body.
  - To procure and manage contracts (>£250k) for the Group i.e., catering, utilities, insurance, loan facilities etc. to ensure best value for the schools.

## Business Development

- To identify and pursue opportunities both to develop new, and grow existing, income streams for the Group.
- To lead on the commercial and business development aspects of the Group's relationship with partners and develop/extend similar relationships globally as possible and appropriate.
- To identify and then lead potential future M&A activity for the Group, establishing working groups and project teams as necessary.



# The Person

**It is highly likely that the appointed candidate will demonstrate all or most of the following:**

## **Education and Qualifications**

- Degree qualified (or equivalent professional qualification)
- Professional qualification in finance, business, law or relevant field
- Evidence of continuing professional development

## **Experience**

- Substantial senior leadership experience in a complex multi-site organisation
- Proven track record in financial management and budgetary control
- Demonstrable experience of leading and developing professional services teams
- Track record of delivering organisational change and improvement; this will include experience of delivering systems and process changes, and evidence of ongoing performance management thereafter
- Experience of strategic planning and business development
- Experience of governance, risk management and regulatory compliance
- Previous experience in the education sector (independent schools preferred)
- Experience of merger and acquisition activities
- Commercial and business development experience in a service organisation
- International business experience

## **Knowledge and Skills**

- Excellent financial acumen and commercial awareness
- Strong analytical and problem-solving capabilities
- Advanced understanding of governance frameworks and regulatory requirements
- Proficient in strategic planning methodologies and performance

management

- Excellent communication and presentation skills, both written and verbal
- Strong negotiation and contract management skills
- Proficiency in relevant ICT systems and business intelligence tools
- Knowledge of charity law and regulations
- Understanding of health and safety legislation
- Familiarity with estates and facilities management

## **Personal Qualities and Competencies**

- Exceptional leadership and people management skills
- Ability to work collaboratively and as part of a team; builds effective relationships at all levels
- High level of integrity and ethical standards
- Resilience and ability to work under pressure
- Excellent organisational and time management skills
- Adaptability and openness to change
- Strong decision-making capabilities
- Commitment to continuous improvement and innovation
- Understanding of and commitment to safeguarding principles
- Cultural sensitivity and awareness
- Experience of working with diverse stakeholder groups
- Ability to inspire and motivate teams across multiple locations

## **Other**

- Flexibility to work additional hours including evenings, weekends and school holidays as required
- Willingness to travel between school sites and attend external meetings
- Availability to attend Governor meetings and school events, including some Saturday mornings
- Willingness to represent the Group at external functions and events
- Flexibility for occasional international travel in relation to global partnerships



"It's a great thing to be a part of Britain"

schools have traditionally been a part of the community and have played a key role in the development of the nation. The first schools were established in the 16th century and have since then been a vital part of the education system. The first schools were established in the 16th century and have since then been a vital part of the education system.



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# Terms of Appointment

**Reports to:** Executive Chair

**Start date:** January 2026 onwards and no later than September 2026

**Salary:** In the region of £140,000 - £160,000, dependent on experience

Pension and fee remission

Accommodation possible – depending on requirement

**Hours of work:** Your normal office hours are Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm. However, given you are in a senior leadership role, you agree to work such additional hours (whether on weekdays, weekends or public holidays) as shall be necessary in the opinion of the Chair to properly discharge your duties. You will be required to attend to any business, including Governors and other meetings and events, which may be scheduled on Saturday mornings.

**Annual leave:** The School holiday year is from 1 July to 30 June. You will be entitled to 30 days' paid holiday in each holiday year to be taken with due regard to the needs of the School and as agreed with the Chair. Holiday must be taken in accordance with the School's Holiday Policy which may be found in the Staff Handbook.



# How to Apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Sherborne School on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at [www.saxbam.com/appointments](http://www.saxbam.com/appointments) using code **TBUWB**

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring\* form.

The closing date for applications is 9am on **Tuesday 28 October**.

Candidates will be required to complete an application form ahead of their first round of interviews with the Selection Committee.

## **Sherborne Schools Group Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement**

The Sherborne Schools 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 for this post must be willing to undergo child protection screening, including reference checks with previous employers and a criminal record check with the Disclosure and Barring Service.

\*The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

## **GDPR personal data notice**

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

## **Due diligence**

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.



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