



## APPOINTMENT OF BURSAR BIRKDALE SCHOOL

**Candidate Pack**

Winter 2021

## The Opportunity

Following the decision of the current Bursar, David Taylor, to retire after 27 years of outstanding service to Birkdale, the Governors and the Head are looking to recruit his successor. The post would ideally be taken up in April 2022, but there is some degree of flexibility around this. The Bursar is responsible for much of the non-educational activity at the School, ensuring that the School operates smoothly on a day to day basis. The Bursar also supports the Governing Body and Head in developing and implementing strategy, and plays a significant leadership role in the development and implementation of the School's financial and commercial strategy.

The Bursar will report to the Head, Peter Harris, and be part of the combined Senior Leadership Team of the Senior School and Prep School. The post holder will also have a dotted reporting line to the Chair of Governors on financial matters and longer-term strategic planning, and as 'Clerk to the Governors' will have significant exposure to the workings of the governing body, the School's board of trustee-directors.

Birkdale is in a sound financial position and is looking to commence a decade of development of the Senior School. The School is gradually expanding its number of full fee-paying pupils in part as a result of the recent decision to welcome girls to all years. It is therefore an exciting time to join Birkdale, with a significant opportunity to make a vital contribution to the School's medium and longer-term plans.

Applications from existing bursars or those who have had relevant experience in a different sector are welcome. In addition to relevant experience, candidates must be evidently enthusiastic about the opportunity of joining a thriving and diverse day school and becoming a key part of its family community.

## About Birkdale

What sort of a school is Birkdale?

Birkdale is a very successful and friendly day school of 780+ pupils from 4-18. Traditionally a boys' school with a co-educational Sixth Form since 1995, Birkdale became a co-educational school from PP1 (Reception) to P1 (Y3) from September 2020, and girls will join the Senior School in September 2024.

Since its foundation in 1904 it has grown and flourished with academic, pastoral and extra-curricular provision being underpinned by an ambitious programme of physical development across its three sites in south-west Sheffield: the 11-18 (Y7 to Y13) Senior School, the 4-11 (Reception to Y6) Prep School, and the playing fields. The School has a strong Christian ethos and is a Foundation School of TISCA (The Independent Schools Christian Alliance).

Birkdale is the only HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference) school in South Yorkshire and the Head is also a member of the Society of Heads. The Head of the Preparatory School is a member of IAPS (the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools) and the Bursar is a member of ISBA (the Independent Schools Bursars' Association).

Why work in Sheffield?

Once the steel-making capital of the world, famous for its cutlery trade, Sheffield now holds the accolade of being the UK's greenest city. Estimated to have over 4.5 million trees – more per person than any other city in Europe – and boasting 250 parks, woodlands and gardens, Sheffield is a hub for all who value the benefits of a city, but enjoy fresh air and the great outdoors.

Birkdale is located in a conservation area in the leafy west of the city, alongside many traditional Victorian villas, close to the city's two universities, 1½ miles from the city centre and 4 miles from the beautiful Peak District National Park. Indoor and outdoor leisure facilities of all kinds – from theatres and restaurants to rock climbing and hill walking – could hardly be closer at hand, making the quality of life very good indeed.

Sheffield is an ethnically diverse city. Whilst the largest minority ethnic group is the Pakistani community, Sheffield also has large Caribbean, Indian, Bangladeshi, Somali, Yemeni and Chinese communities.

In summary, if you're looking for culture, affordability and a sense of belonging, Sheffield offers it all.

## What are Birkdale's academic standards?

The expectation is that nearly all pupils, having entered the school at various ages, will progress through to A level. The GCSE pass (9-4) rate is consistently around 99%, with the proportion of 9-7 grades around 60%. Twenty-eight A level subjects are offered. Most pupils start with four academic subjects in the lower sixth leading on to three or more A levels in the upper sixth. A level pupils can also take a wide range of unexamined enrichment courses or the Extended Project Qualification. The A level results are very good with around 85% of entries resulting in A\*-C grades.

## What happens outside the classroom?

The School's academic emphasis, although important, is not exclusive. The extracurricular activities programme caters for most interests: sports, music, drama and outdoor pursuits flourish.

Birkdale is fortunate in having a diverse staff base in addition to many strong relationships with other organisations outside the School. This means Birkdale can offer a rich and vibrant multi-cultural pastoral programme. Birkdale employs language assistants from all over Europe and has volunteers working at the School from as far away as Chile.

All members of the teaching staff are expected to contribute to the wider life of the School beyond their academic commitment, with many activities occurring in the evenings and at weekends. The work of the Bursar's team is critical in underpinning this breadth of offering, and it is important that the new Bursar will have a good appreciation of ensuring this breadth is maintained or, indeed, expanded.

## What makes Birkdale special?

The Christian ethos of the School manifests itself in the particularly friendly and supportive atmosphere. A good proportion of the staff, including the Heads and Deputy Heads, are committed Christians, although as a community Birkdale welcomes all, whatever they believe. The School is strongly committed to the care of its pupils and its staff. In comparison with other schools which prioritise both academic achievement and all-round development, it is this clear Christian ethos and its outworking in the School being an environment where each individual is valued which makes Birkdale stand out.

## Diversity at Birkdale

Birkdale knows that when people come together with different approaches and insights it can lead to a richer, and more creative environment, delivering innovative teaching to pupils. The School is proud of its already diverse community and is committed to working together to create a fully inclusive environment where everyone can flourish. Ethnic minority groups are currently under represented in the School's staff body. Birkdale actively encourages applications from eligible candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The Senior Leadership Team, the Bursar's team, Property and Financial

In addition to the Bursar, the Senior Leadership Team ('SLT') includes the Head of the School, the Head of the Prep School, and the Deputy Heads. Communication and support across the SLT is vital in the running of the School, and the SLT meet regularly to talk and pray together.

The Bursar's finance team comprises the School Accountant, the Finance Manager and two Assistants. Other direct reports include: Maintenance Supervisor, Head Groundsman and Cleaning Supervisor. Indirect reports comprise long-term catering and cleaning contractors.

Birkdale has a turnover of approximately £10 million, with bursaries of £870,000. Annual surpluses over the past 10 years have typically fluctuated from £100,000 to £500,000. The overall staff team of 165 is stable and committed, with a relatively low turnover. Pupil numbers are expected to grow gradually over the next few years, creating an increasing trend in operating surpluses which will enable the School to fund a significant period of development. Financial acumen and a careful approach to responsible risk management will be a key attribute of the new Bursar.

Birkdale operates across three sites: the two acre Prep School site comprising Belmayne House and Clarke House; the six acre Senior School site across a number of buildings; and 30 acres of playing fields at Castle Dyke, 2½ miles away on the edge of the Peak District. One of the School's major challenges is the Senior School being 'land-locked' by university and privately owned residential properties, which restricts its ability to expand. However, grow and develop it must, not least in anticipation of the arrival of girls into Year 7 in 2024. Therefore the Governors are looking to work with the Head and Bursar over the months and years ahead to be innovative in Senior School property and infrastructure development – leadership and agility in this will be a top priority for the new Bursar.

## The Role

### Overall objective of the post:

The Bursar reports to and works closely with the Head on a day-to-day basis, ensuring the smooth running of most aspects of non-teaching operations. The Bursar has specific responsibility for the areas of finance, property, health and safety, HR and facilities management (catering and cleaning). The Bursar is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Bursar also has a dotted reporting line to the Chair of Governors in respect of financial matters and longer-term strategic planning, and will speak with the Chair on a regular (typically weekly) basis. As 'Clerk to the Governors' the Bursar works with the Chair to coordinate the working of the Board.

The Bursar is supported in their role by a team of finance and property staff as set out above.

### Specific Responsibilities:

Key responsibilities of the Bursar are, but are not limited to:

- Working closely with the Head and Governors to shape the School's ongoing strategic development.
- Providing wider leadership to the whole school community as a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Providing leadership and effective management and care for most non-teaching personnel in the School, including employees and external contractors.
- Leadership and responsibility of the School's financial operations. Overseeing the development and implementation of financial strategy, sound and responsible financial management, the smooth running of all payments and receipts including pensions and payroll, and the development and delivery of high quality, timely management information.
- Effective risk management, including identifying, understanding, managing and mitigating all facets of risk for the School. This includes financial risk management, health & safety, insurance, GDPR and other relevant legal and compliance matters. The Bursar plays a critical part in ensuring that the School is compliant and inspection ready.

- Providing leadership on estates-related matters across the School, including future major capital developments or refurbishment projects, the acquiring and/or disposing of assets and the maintenance of a safe and high-quality campus which is fit for purpose and effectively communicates the School's brand. Building close relationships with external advisers (for example, architects and lawyers) and local organisations (for example, the University of Sheffield).
- Oversight of non-teaching supplies and activities, including School transport coordination. Leads on the commercial activities of the School, in particular building good relationships with third parties and maximising income sources.
- Communications with parents over fee payment and / or bursary provision.
- Oversight of Birkdale's infrastructure, technology and business management systems to ensure efficient and effective use of processes, systems and resource.
- As Clerk to the Governors, maintaining a close relationship with the Chair, attending all Board and Board Committee meetings, and providing high quality management information, legal advice, and administrative and clerical support to the Board.
- Holding the role of Company Secretary, ensuring the timely delivery of all regulatory reporting and compliance with all legal and taxation matters relevant to the running of the School.

## Person Specification

### Knowledge and experience

It is likely that strong candidates for this role will have all or most of the following experience:

- Leadership experience at a senior level within an organisation or division of comparable size to Birkdale, or as a Bursar in a smaller school
- Experience as a finance professional and managing a finance team, or having had a degree of financial oversight commensurate with what is required in this role
- Management experience leading multi-functional teams
- Experience in a regulated environment would be highly advantageous; has existing knowledge, or the ability to assimilate quickly the range of regulations a school has to meet, including safeguarding
- Stakeholder management
- Experience of change management
- Experience of managing operations and estates

### Qualifications

- A financial qualification is not essential, but is desirable
- It is likely that this person will have been educated at degree level, or equivalent
- Track record of successful and relevant CPD

## Personal attributes

- Has a personal ethos which resonates with that of the Birkdale community, and is pleased to be supportive of Birkdale's Christian ethos
- Builds strong and effective teams and works with and through others in a collaborative way
- Is good with people and enjoys building relationships
- First rate communication skills and able to communicate effectively with a range of different people both in writing and orally
- Financially highly literate and able to translate financial matters in a way which is understandable to a non-finance person
- Fully supportive of Birkdale's safeguarding culture and understands their personal responsibility in relation to keeping children safe and that of the School
- Intellectually able and able to turn their mind to a range of different sorts of issues and challenges; keeps abreast of developments in the sector in which they work and able to apply them appropriately
- Natural problem solver
- Willing and able to contribute at both strategic and operational levels and comfortable delivering on projects and tasks that fall into both areas
- Takes real pride in their work and delivers at a high standard
- Decisive, resilient and has sound judgement
- Innovative and agile, with the ability to propose and debate commercially valuable opportunities
- Good sense of humour and builds a strong sense of community around them
- Organised and efficient
- Grounded and down to earth; willing to roll their sleeves up where necessary

## How to Apply

For more information and an application pack please visit [www.minervasearch.com/birkdale](http://www.minervasearch.com/birkdale).

To apply please send an application form, CV and cover letter of no more than two pages, addressed to Mr Peter Harris, the Head, to [birkdale@minervasearch.com](mailto:birkdale@minervasearch.com) by no later than 12.00 noon on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Early applications are encouraged.

For a confidential pre-application conversation please contact Jo Ogilvy or Tom Cheater at [birkdale@minervasearch.com](mailto:birkdale@minervasearch.com).

Strong candidates for the role will be asked to have a further conversation with Minerva ahead of a shortlisting meeting in mid-January.

The first round of interviews will take place at Birkdale School on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 with the second round of interviews taking place at Birkdale School on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

It is the School's policy to employ the best qualified personnel and to provide equal opportunity for the advancement of employees including promotion and training and not to discriminate against any person because of their race, colour, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, religion or religious belief, disability or age. All new appointments are subject to a probationary period.

Birkdale School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. Offers of appointment are subject to an enhanced DBS check.

If your application is successful, the School will retain the information provided in this form (together with any attachments) on your personnel file. If your application is unsuccessful, all documentation relating to your application will normally be confidentially destroyed by Birkdale School after six months.