



Clerk to the Aske Board

Candidate Pack

October/November 2020

The Opportunity

The Chairman of the Aske Board is seeking to appoint a new Clerk, who will play an important role in supporting the work of the Aske Board in providing oversight to the two high performing Haberdashers' Aske's Schools in Elstree. The principal role of the Clerk is to facilitate the work of the Chairman and the business of the Governors by acting as a 'Chief of Staff' and advisor to the Chairman, the Governors and its Committees.

This is a three day a week role, which would suit someone who combines the expertise and aptitude to provide assistance across a range of administrative and governance areas and enjoys operating at a senior level in a high performing organisation. The Clerk must be highly efficient, organised and well-able to respond both proactively and reactively to a wide range of different requirements. They will need to build a particularly close working relationship with the Chairman of the Aske Board and candidates who are comfortable working at pace, have a strong work ethic and sound intellect are likely to enjoy this relationship.

The work of the Aske's Charity is in part delivered through the Haberdashers' Aske's Schools in Elstree. The two schools (an all-through girls' school and an all-through boys' school, both achieving high academic outcomes and amongst the largest day schools in the country) occupy the same campus. Whilst run separately by two recently appointed Heads, they work collaboratively to maximise the benefits of single sex education in a co-educational environment operating on the same site. They are supported by a Chief Operating Officer who is responsible for the administrative functions required to support the significant range of financial, estate and operational activities. There is a single governing body for both Schools – the Aske Board, comprising 21 Governors operating principally through 6 cross-School Committees. The Schools enjoy annual revenues in excess of £50m and employ over 650 staff supporting c2600 pupils.

The Board has recently set out a very clear set of strategic priorities for the Schools as they look to make significant change over the next 10 to 15 years, and it is against this genuinely exciting and ambitious backdrop that the Clerk will be supporting and facilitating the Board's work. The key priorities which have been set out are in the areas of:

- Excellence in Education
- Workplace and Life Skills
- Pupil Well-being and Pastoral Care
- Global Perspective
- Maximise Differentiation and Benefits of Co-Location of the Girls' and Boys' Schools
- Enhanced Co-Curricular Programme and Collaboration
- Best place to Learn, Teach and Work
- Embrace Robert Aske's Legacy
- Improve Stakeholder Communications and Reduce the 'Habs' Bubble'
- Display Financial Discipline and Estate Stewardship

The two Schools were established as a result of the benefaction of Robert Aske, a member of the Haberdashers' Company. The Board today is clear about seeking to reflect the founder's principles of inclusivity, benevolence and charity. It is therefore of real interest to the Board that their Clerk is someone who understands the multi-faceted nature of independent schools, including in this case, a genuine desire to ensure that these Schools remain relevant and inclusive, and open to those who are going to most benefit from the education that is on offer, regardless of their ability to pay.

The Elstree Governing Body – the Aske Board – acts as the School Trustee and is responsible for the strategy, operations and investment into the Elstree Schools on behalf of the Aske’s Charity, via a limited liability company, Haberdashers’ Aske’s Elstree Schools Limited (HAESL).

Further information about the Board and Governors can be found at:

<https://www.habsgirls.org.uk/about/board-of-governors/> and at:
<https://www.habsboys.org.uk/senior-school/about-us/governors-and-staff>

Beyond the Elstree campus, the Clerk will engage more widely with other key stakeholders, including the Haberdashers’ Company, one of the Great Twelve Livery Companies of the City of London. The Company has a clear focus on education, (through 3 main charitable endowments), charity and civic duty. It is amongst the most inclusive and diverse of all Livery Companies as a consequence of its breadth of activity. The Elstree Schools are supported by the Aske’s Charity, which also supports 9 state sector schools in the Aske Federation in South East London.

This role provides the opportunity to operate as part of a wider family of schools, with the Haberdashers’ Company running 23 schools across England and Wales. Between them, these schools operate across the grammar, academy and independent sectors and offer both day and boarding provision. There is active sharing of best practice at multiple levels between all 4 main ‘hubs’.

More information on the other schools can be found at:

<https://www.haberdashers.co.uk/our-schools>

The Role

The Chairman of the Aske Board is seeking to appoint a Clerk who will assist and advise the Chairman, the committee chairs, the Governors and the wider board, as appropriate. The Clerk will report to the Chairman and operate as a conduit for information and action on the wide range of matters relating to the Board’s engagement with the Schools, the Haberdashers’ Company and any other stakeholders with whom the Board interacts. To do this successfully, the Clerk will develop and maintain trusted relationships with the key members of this varied community, enabling them to play a crucial role in ensuring the Board’s work can be carried out in an effective, sensitive and informed way. The Clerk’s role is in part about servant leadership, and the person will be comfortable that their role is about influencing and advising, rather than decision making, but it is no less important that they can apply sound judgement, objectivity and knowledge to the discussions.

The Clerk will be comfortable with the multifarious nature of the Board’s work and able to create order from often competing priorities, thereby assisting the Chair in ensuring there is ongoing clarity of direction and that it is understood by the many different stakeholders. In all that the Clerk does, it will be important that they have a subtle and nuanced approach, recognizing when to stay silent, support, challenge or disagree in equal measure with the various constituencies. In order to do this effectively, it will be important that the Clerk is seen to be acting in the best interests of delivering the charity’s objectives. It is also hoped that the Clerk will take a wider interest in the life of both Schools and the Company and attendance at events beyond those arranged by the Board would be positively encouraged.

The remit of the role will include the following, but without limitation:

Communication and Liaison:

- Acting as the point of contact with the Heads and COO and their assistants on behalf of the Governors regarding operational matters, scheduling and diary related matters.
- Acting as a point of contact between the Aske Board, HAESL, the Haberdashers' Company and the Aske Charity, specifically the Clerk, Director of Schools, Director of Finance and The Beadle where appropriate.
- Coordinating the process for, and the involvement of the Chairman of Governors/other Governors /Company personnel in the appointment of Senior Executives – Heads/COO.
- Dissemination of Governance best practice and liaising with organisation such as AGBIS (The Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools).
- Liaising generally in preparation for, and conduct of, deputations to both Schools.

Governors:

- With the Chairman, review Governance structure and performance annually and manage a bi-annual review of Governance structure effectiveness.
- With the Chairman of Governors, to maintain an accurate 'Governor Plot' and Committee responsibility matrix.
- Maintaining records of the appointment of Governors, notifying vacancies to relevant appointing bodies and preparing for the retirement of Governors by rotation or otherwise.
- Procuring the completion and signing of the minute book, all relevant documents and records to dealing with the formalities of appointment and retirement of Governors.
- Maintaining the Governors' Handbook.
- Acquiring, maintaining and circulating induction documentation to Governors including their appointment letter and ensuring the Single Central Register is up to date.
- Ensuring that Governors are inducted and trained so that they understand their role as the school trustee of the Aske charity.

- With the Schools, ensuring Governors have completed initial and subsequent training courses such that they are compliant with relevant legislation at all times.
- In conjunction with the Education Committee, facilitating initial and continuation training of Governors and ensure currency of knowledge by the provision of substitute documentation from time to time.
- Advise Governors on legislation affecting their responsibilities and liabilities, secure appropriate insurance for the Governors as trustees, and take professional advice on the Governors' behalf.
- In conjunction with the Schools, ensuring Governors are adequately prepared for ISI or other inspections.
- Maintaining the Governors' intranet, telephone and video conferencing facility and liaison with the Schools' IT department regarding communication, data provision and email.

Administration:

- Taking a proactive approach to agreeing, arranging and promulgating the dates of the Governors meetings and Committee meetings to form an orderly and linked cascade through the academic year.
- With the Chairman of Governors and the respective Committee chairmen, to formulate agendas for meetings across the year to discharge the responsibilities of the Aske Board and meet the requirements of the Schools. Ensuring the Board sub committees fulfil their delegated authority.
- To arrange and support other meetings not called by their respective chairmen that require Governor attendance.
- Procuring and distributing papers in a standardised format for Governors meetings & Committees including the collation and synthesis of recommendations for approval.
- Attending and taking the minutes of the Governors meetings and Committees.
- Publication of minutes and actions from meetings and maintaining a record of actions completed, delegated to Committees or otherwise as required. Monitor and chase actions to ensure delivery.
- Maintaining the minute book and books of account of the Governors.
- At the request of the Chairman, organising, attending and taking the minutes of a review or appeal meetings arising from the Complaints Procedures at either school.

Compliance:

- Monitoring due compliance of the Governors with their delegated and statutory duties.
- Ensuring Governors are appropriately trained to comply with Independent School Inspection regulatory compliance requirements.
- Monitoring adherence to the Objects of the Charity.
- In consultation with the Haberdashers' Governors Education Committee, monitoring and notifying developments in accountancy practice relevant to the operation of the Schools.
- Ensuring compliance with data protection and information regulations regarding Governors' communication and data storage.
- Keeping a central record of Governor visits and report forms.
- Maintain a register of Governor and School Policies and ensuring regular review, update and publication.

Person Specification

Applications are welcomed from candidates who are motivated by the idea of working with an ambitious and committed board, where the focus of the work is on the provision of outstanding education, relevant for a 21st Century pupil body. It is essential that candidates for the role show a genuine interest in being part of a vibrant and diverse school community, given much of the role will see them engaging and developing effective working relationships with both the non-executive and executive leadership of both Schools. It is highly likely that the person will have operated at a senior level themselves, in an environment of some complexity, where expectations and work rate are high.

It is likely that candidates will have all or most of the following experience:

- Has operated on, or with, a board or senior leadership team, demonstrating a strong grasp of what good governance looks like
- Financial or legal expertise; a qualification in either of these areas is not essential, but would be seen as helpful
- Experience working at a senior level in a regulated environment, in either a non-profit or commercial sector
- A track record of having delivered at a senior level in one or more areas relevant to this role
- Experience operating in a role where influence and persuasion have been important for success; it would be helpful if the person had had prior experience of working in comparable support role before
- Experience of high performing cultures

Strong candidates will demonstrate that they have, or are, the following:

- A strong intellect
- An able and flexible communicator, both orally and in writing
- Outstanding judgement and clarity of thought
- Excellent interpersonal skills, and enjoys building relationships across a variety of communities
- Strong ability to influence and persuade
- Comfortable in their own skin, and appreciate the value a supporting role such as this can add; understands the value of servant leadership
- Able to build an effective relationship with the Chairman of the Board, operating as a sounding board and adviser as appropriate
- Able to engage in dialogue and put forward well-reasoned and informed challenge, where appropriate
- Well organised and highly efficient, with an ability to prioritise and synchronise tasks; comfortable using technology as needed
- A strong grasp of the importance of safeguarding and other regulatory frameworks within which schools operate, with a personal commitment to the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people
- High personal standards
- An inclusive outlook and seeks to engender diversity of thought and approach
- Appreciation of the balance between the modernity of the student body and the value of tradition
- Comfortable with the role which independent schools play in the wider education sector
- A genuine interest in the education and development of children and young people and an enthusiasm for engaging with the life of the two Schools, beyond the limits of their own role

Terms

The hope is that the Clerk will be able to start in post in the spring of 2021.

This is a three day a week role, on average, across the 52-week year. The Clerk should work flexibly to meet the demands of the role. It is anticipated that the workload will be higher in term time than in school holidays. There will be aspects of this working pattern which will be influenced by the particular priorities of any given time and by the natural rhythm of the Schools' calendars.

The remuneration for the role will be agreed with the preferred candidate and will be dependent upon experience. A reasonable travel and expenses budget will also be made available. Candidates who are interested in being engaged on a self-employed consultancy basis rather than an employee will be considered.

Whilst it is expected that the Clerk will have a home office, they need to be able to spend some time on a regular basis at the Schools, where an allocated working space will be provided. There will also be times when the Clerk will attend events at the Hall or other locations.

How to Apply

For more information please visit www.minervasearch.com/aske and for a further conversation about the role please contact Jo Ogilvy or Ellie Hopkins via aske@minervasearch.com

To apply please send a CV and cover letter of no more than two pages, addressed to Simon Cartmell, Chairman of the Aske Board to aske@minervasearch.com by no later than 9am on Wednesday 25th November 2020.

Strong candidates will be invited to have a further discussion with Minerva to discuss the role in more detail, ahead of shortlisting which will take place in w/c 14th December. It is our intention to let candidates know the outcome of their application by no later than the w/c 21st December 2020.

Shortlisted candidates will be offered the chance to have informal discussions in early January, ahead of a formal interview, which will most likely take place w/c 11th January 2021.

In light of current restrictions, we would be grateful for your patience if changes to these arrangements occur during the process.

The Haberdashers' Aske's Elstree Schools are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection training and screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service. This will include the completion of an application form as part of the process.