BRISTOL FREE SCHOOL

RET
RUSSELL EDUCATION TRUST

HEADTEACHER

Closing date: Friday 10 April 2026 at midday
Interviews: Wednesday 22 & Thursday 23 April 2026

ABOUT THIS ROLE

Headteacher – Bristol Free School (BFS)
Location: Bristol
Salary Range (depending on experience): L33 - L41
Contract: Full-time, permanent

An Exceptional Opportunity for an Inspirational Leader
BFS is seeking to appoint an outstanding new Headteacher to build on the achievements of Susan King who is moving on to new challenges following her eight years leading our thriving and high-achieving learning community.

We are seeking an experienced and effective leader who can inspire, innovate and drive the continued success of a school which has a strong reputation for excellence, creativity and inclusivity. BFS was the first school in the Russell Education Trust (RET) and plays a central role in its continued success. BFS has already established a close working relationship with its largest feeder school, Elmlea (now also an RET school) and is developing new partnerships by working with other schools in Bristol and across RET.

This is an exciting opportunity to shape the future of BFS, fostering a culture of high expectations, inclusion, outstanding teaching and a passion for lifelong learning. Our new Headteacher will be committed to developing both staff and students, ensuring that BFS continues to be a place where every student thrives academically, socially and emotionally, and every member of staff is helped to develop their professional skills.

What We Offer:
- A vibrant and supportive school community with a committed team of staff, governors, and engaged families
- Happy, motivated students who love learning and strive for excellence
- A well-established culture of high achievement, with a strong curriculum and extensive enrichment programmes
- The opportunity to shape and drive strategic growth in partnership with RET
- A commitment to your professional development, with access to leadership support and collaboration across RET's network of schools

What We Are Looking For:
An inspirational and ambitious leader who:

- Has a proven track record of successful school leadership and driving excellent outcomes for students
- Is passionate about teaching, learning, and curriculum development, with a focus on high-quality education for all
- Can cultivate a positive and inclusive school culture, ensuring that every student is valued, challenged, and supported
- Has exceptional communication skills to engage effectively with students, staff, parents, and the wider school community
- Can work strategically, making evidence-based decisions to drive improvement and innovation

About Russell Education Trust (RET)
RET is a family of high-performing schools that share best practices and expertise to ensure the highest standards of education. RET provides strong professional support and leadership development, while still ensuring that each school retains its own unique identity.

Safeguarding Statement
BFS is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check, along with other relevant pre-employment checks.

Next Steps
If you are an enthusiastic and dedicated leader ready to make a lasting impact, we would love to hear from you.

To arrange a visit, please contact the Headteacher's PA, Sharon Eynon, at s.eynon@bristolfreeschool.org.uk.

To arrange an informal conversation about the role then please email Colin Mackinlay at ceo@russelleducationtrust.org.uk.

Deadline for applications is midday on 10 April 2026
Interviews will be held Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 April 2026

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Dear Applicant,

Post of Headteacher (L33 - L41)

Thank you for your interest in the headship at Bristol Free School (BFS). This is an exciting opportunity for a talented, committed and values-driven leader to shape the future of a thriving, inclusive and high-performing 11–18 school at the heart of North-West Bristol.

BFS was founded through the determination of local parents who wanted high-quality secondary provision for their community. Today, that founding purpose remains central to our identity. We are a popular and oversubscribed school, admitting 200 students each year, and we serve a richly diverse and fully comprehensive intake. Our values of Community, Ambition and Opportunity are lived every day and define the culture to which our students and staff are proud to belong.

BFS is a happy, hardworking community where individuality is encouraged and differences are celebrated. This ethos underpins our academic and pastoral approach. We offer a broad, challenging and well-sequenced curriculum that enables students to think deeply, communicate confidently and engage with complex ideas. Ofsted recognised in 2022 that "teachers are ambitious for all pupils" and noted that their subject expertise is a real strength.

BFS is nationally recognised in The Sunday Times Parent Power Guide 2026 for its high academic performance and commitment to student success. It was placed in the top 5 non-selective schools in the South-West. GCSE results consistently place the school significantly above local and national averages. The Sixth Form is similarly very high performing: in 2025 progress measures placed it as the best state school in Bristol for progress which leads to impressive destinations and ever-increasing popularity in terms of student numbers. BFS is particularly proud that this year, previously disadvantaged students made more progress than their peers.

Beyond the classroom, our enrichment programme is extensive and purposeful. The BFS Promise ensures that every student experiences a rich range of cultural, sporting, creative and leadership opportunities that build character and broaden horizons. Our Sixth Form continues this commitment, nurturing compassionate, independent thinkers who are well prepared for university, apprenticeships and the world beyond school.

Pastoral care is a hallmark of our provision. As our prospectus notes, “school life is fun, challenging and fulfilling, but there will always be times when support is required.” Our dedicated teams ensure that every student is known, valued and supported to thrive.

Bristol Free School is part of the Russell Education Trust (RET), a family of high-performing schools with outcomes significantly above national average in all areas, leading to a very high position in the DfE’s performance table of multi-academy trusts. RET provides robust professional support, high-quality networks and a culture of collaboration, whilst ensuring that each school retains its distinctive identity and deep connection to its community.

We are seeking a Headteacher who will:

- Be an outstanding practitioner both as a teacher and as a school leader
- Champion our values and sustain our culture of high expectations
- Lead with integrity, ambition and moral purpose
- Inspire staff and students through visible, compassionate leadership
- Be committed to working in partnership with parents to ensure that the school is at the heart of the community
- Contribute actively to the wider work of the Russell Education Trust

We welcome visits from prospective candidates, and we would be very happy to talk to you informally – for you to be the right Headteacher for BFS, we need to be the right school and Trust for you.

Thank you once again for your interest. We look forward to receiving your application.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Marie-Boyle
Chair of Governors

Colin Mackinlay
Chief Executive, Russell Education Trust

INTRODUCTION TO BFS

About the School
Bristol Free School is a successful, inclusive 11–18 secondary school located in Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol. Established in 2011 through a partnership between local parents and RET, BFS has grown into a high-performing school with a strong reputation for academic achievement, pastoral care and community engagement.

BFS is described as a "happy, hardworking community" where relationships are warm, positive, and built on mutual respect. The school sets high expectations for behaviour, effort, and achievement, and students are encouraged to be the best they can be.

Vision & Values
BFS is guided by three core values:

Community
Every child is known, valued and supported. The school works closely with families and partners to secure strong outcomes.

Ambition
High expectations for all students and staff, with a focus on academic excellence and personal growth.

Opportunity
A rich curriculum and extensive enrichment programme ensuring that every student can explore their interests and develop new skills.

Community and Partnerships
BFS is deeply connected to its local community and works closely with families, local organisations, and other RET schools. The school's origins in parent advocacy continue to shape its collaborative culture.

House System
At Bristol Free School, all students and staff are members of one of four houses. The house system creates smaller communities within the larger school, fostering a sense of belonging, shared identity, and healthy competition. It provides a focal point for awards, events, and activities that mix different age groups, allowing older students to mentor younger ones.

The house system also supports the recognition of students who exemplify the school's Core Values. Each house participates in annual fundraising events to support local charities, promoting community spirit and social responsibility.

Curriculum
The BFS curriculum is broad, balanced, and designed to challenge and inspire. Students benefit from:

- Strong foundations in core subjects
- A wide range of GCSE and A Level options
- High-quality teaching from specialist staff
- A focus on developing independent, resilient learners
- The Sixth Form is thriving, with outstanding outcomes and excellent facilities.

Ethos and Culture
BFS is known for:

- A nurturing, inclusive environment
- Trauma-informed behaviour systems
- A strong focus on wellbeing
- Celebrating diversity and individuality
- The school has been recognised for innovative approaches to health, wellbeing, and student voice.

INTRODUCTION TO RUSSELL EDUCATION TRUST

Background to the Trust

Russell Education Trust is a family of community and faith schools, each with its own distinctive identity. Our shared vision is to provide all students with an outstanding education, underpinned by a commitment to respect, responsibility, fairness, and equality. The effectiveness of the Trust and its schools has been singled out by the DfE and recognised in Ofsted reports. All our secondary schools were born of partnerships between local parents and RET, and this partnership remains very healthy.

Our schools embody these principles by fostering safe, happy learning environments where students are encouraged to explore their potential without limits. We believe that when students feel secure and valued, they are empowered to excel academically and personally.

Our curriculum is designed to be enjoyable, encourage responsibility, build self-esteem, demand high standards, enable achievement, and provide strong foundations for future learning. We are committed to equal value and opportunity, supporting all students to achieve their greatest potential not just academically, but also as creative, caring, and responsible future adults.

By joining RET, you become part of a community dedicated to making a meaningful difference in the lives of young people, inspiring them to achieve their best and contribute positively to society.

Russell Education Trust's Schools

Bristol Free School

"Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum is designed to build knowledge over time. It helps pupils remember what they learn. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is engaging for pupils, and that it promotes diversity."

Ofsted 2022

Becket Keys Church of England School

"Becket Keys is a school where pupils flourish academically, socially, and spiritually. Strong relationships with staff, and excellent pastoral support, mean that pupils feel valued and well looked after. Pupils benefit from an exceptional quality of education. They enjoy work that challenges them to think deeply and apply their knowledge. Teachers have high expectations, and pupils rise to meet them."

Ofsted 2025

King's School

"Pupils are confident, articulate and aspiring. They are proud to be part of the school community. The school's provision for their education and welfare makes a significant contribution to their lives. The Christian ethos ensures that pupils are kind to one another and look after each other well. The school values of love, forgiveness, respect and responsibility permeate the school environment."

Ofsted 2022

St Andrew the Apostle Greek Orthodox School

"Pupils here are happy members of this school community and said that it feels like 'a family'. They interact warmly with staff, who speak to pupils with care and respect. Pupils are safe and confident in knowing who to approach if they need to talk, and that they will receive help."

Ofsted 2024

Turing House School

"The school's vision of a 'safe, happy and learning community' is entirely realised. This is because the school is inclusive, placing pupils right at the heart of its work. The school strives for academic excellence alongside developing the whole individual. Pupils feel safe, and their attendance is high."

Ofsted 2024

Elmlea Infant and Junior School

Elmlea Infant School: "Pupils flourish at Elmlea Infant School. They achieve extremely well. Pupils fully understand how the school's values help them to be kind, respectful and eager to learn. Parents and carers speak highly about the school's community feel and the care and attention that staff show towards pupils."

Ofsted 2023

Elmlea Junior School: "Pupils thrive at this warm and welcoming school. Everyone feels a strong sense of belonging. Pupils are immensely proud of their school, and they attend well. They have a deep understanding of the schools' core values of 'kindness, respect and community'. They consistently demonstrate these in all aspects of school life."

Ofsted 2025

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Headteacher
Responsible to: CEO, Governing Body and Board of Trustees
Salary Range: L33 - L41
Post: Permanent and Full Time

This Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We follow safer recruitment procedures.

CORE PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

The core purpose of this role is to provide professional leadership and management for the school and to work closely with the school's Trust to promote high standards in all aspects of the school's work.

To achieve success, the Headteacher will:

- Share the Trust's vision providing spiritual, moral and educational leadership and direction
- Effectively manage teaching and learning
- Promote excellence, equality and high expectations of all students
- Deploy resources to achieve the school's aims and vision
- Evaluate school performance and identify priorities for continuous improvement
- Carry out day-to-day management, organisation and administration
- Create a safe and productive learning environment that is engaging and fulfilling for all students
- Work with the CEO and fellow Headteachers to develop and disseminate best practice in all our schools

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Direction and Shaping the Future

- Work with the Trust and other key stakeholders to ensure the vision for the school is clearly articulated, shared, understood, and acted upon
- Work within the Trust and school community to translate vision into agreed objectives that promote and sustain school improvement
- Demonstrate and promote the school's educational values in everyday work and practice
- Motivate and work with others to create a shared culture and positive environment
- Ensure that strategic planning is translated into effective development planning and evaluation at every level in the school

Managing the Organisation

- Implement an organisational structure that reflects the school's values and enables management processes to work effectively in line with legal and Trust requirements
- Manage the school's resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's educational goals and priorities
- Recruit, retain and deploy staff appropriately and assist in managing their workload to achieve the school's vision and goals, using RET performance management procedures
- Manage the school environment efficiently and effectively to ensure that it meets the needs of the curriculum and health and safety regulations
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met

Leading Learning and Teaching

- Ensure that the quality of teaching leads to outstanding achievement across the school
- Ensure that student responsibility, achievement, safety and wellbeing are at the heart of all school activities
- Create a culture of academic excellence and an ethos of challenge and support, in which all students can achieve success and become engaged in their own learning
- Demonstrate and articulate high expectations and set stretching targets for the whole school community
- Secure high standards of behaviour, self-discipline and attendance
- Deliver a broad curriculum suited to the diverse needs of students
- Take a strategic role in the development of new and emerging technologies to enhance and extend the learning experience of students
- Monitor, evaluate and review classroom practice and promote improvement strategies
- Implement core strategies for developing excellent and effective teachers to ensure that all students have every opportunity to access and benefit from excellent and effective teaching

Developing Self and Working with Others

- Regularly review own practice, set personal targets, and take responsibility for own personal and spiritual development
- Work with the Trust to develop and maintain effective strategies and procedures for staff induction, professional development and performance reviews
- Delegate tasks and responsibilities, so that teams and individuals undertake effective planning, allocation, support and evaluation of work
- Acknowledge the responsibilities and achievements of teams and individuals
- Manage their own workload and that of others to allow an appropriate work/life balance
- Develop strong and effective interpersonal relationships
- Develop and sustain a strong and effective leadership and management team

SECURING ACCOUNTABILITY

- Be accountable to the Trust for all aspects of the school's performance
- Provide information and objective advice and support to the Trust to enable it to meet its responsibilities
- Develop a school ethos that enables everyone to work collaboratively, share knowledge and understanding, celebrate success and accept responsibility for outcomes
- Ensure individual staff accountabilities are clearly defined, understood, and subject to rigorous review
- Formulate and present a coherent and accurate account of the school's performance to a range of audiences

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

- Build a school culture and curriculum which takes into account the achievement, richness and diversity of the school's communities and its local primary schools
- Collaborate with other agencies to promote the academic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of students and their families, and co-operate and work with relevant agencies to protect children
- Create and use effective methods of consultation, collaboration and dissemination to communicate vision, principles and policies
- Create and maintain an effective partnership with parents, carers and other professionals to support and improve students' achievement and personal development
- Create an excellent partnership with parents and carers, and actively involve them in their child's development and learning
- Encourage community organisations and businesses, as well as other schools, to work in partnership with the school and, when appropriate, to share the school's resources and facilities for the good of the wider local community

NATIONAL STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

This job description is based on the DfE's National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers. The Headteacher is accountable to RET for the standards achieved and the conduct, management and administration of the school, subject to the law and DfE, charity and company regulation. This job description is subject to annual review.

OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING

RET is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

Headteacher - Person Specification
In your application, you need only address those aspects of the person specification which are highlighted in bold. These and the other aspects of the person specification will be addressed further in the assessment and interview process.

Person Specification - Criteria			(E) Essential (D) Desirable	Method of Assessment A – Application Form/Letter C – Certificate I – Interview R – References
Qualifications and experience *Qualification evidence will be requested at arrival if you successfully called for interview	1	Headteacher experience	(E)	A/C
	2	Graduate with Qualified Teacher Status	(E)	A/C
	3	Further relevant post graduate study (recent NPQH) preferred	(D)	A/C
	4	Evidence of Continuous Professional Development	(E)	A
	5	Substantial successful leadership experience in a senior role in secondary school(s)	(E)	A
	6	N/A		
	7	Direct experience of: • Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and wellbeing of pupils • School strategic development planning and self- • evaluation Raising standards in learning and teaching and improving outcomes • Recruiting and developing skilled and effective teams throughout the school • Effective change management	(E)	A/R/I
	8	Development of effective and sustainable relationships, respect and credibility working with key stakeholders including staff, pupils, families, Governors, other schools, the wider community and other external partners and organisations	(E)	A/I
	9	Experience of effective management of people and financial resources	(E)	A/I
Qualities and knowledge	10	Having vision and ambition with the ability to think and work strategically. Able to build and communicate a coherent vision of excellence and equality, empowering all pupils and staff to contribute and excel.	(E)	I
	11	Recent evidence of planning and leading whole school improvement initiatives and policies which have a demonstrable impact on pupils' attainment. Ability to demonstrate a secure understanding of the relationship between self-evaluation, performance management, continuing Professional Development and sustained school improvement.	(E)	A/I
	12	Knowledge and understanding of and ability to respond to current educational policies and practices including statutory requirements and the legal framework in which schools operate. Political insight and knowledge of national trends that could impact upon the school.	(E)	A/I

	13	Vision to lead on continuous site development, including bidding for external grants to continue to deliver a modern, fit for purpose and effective environment to support the vision and objectives of the school.	(D)	A/I
Pupils and staff	14	Practitioner with a clear understanding of what makes good and outstanding learning, teaching and assessment, leading by example. Track record of the professional development of teams and staff to raise the quality of teaching to improve outcomes.	(E)	A/I
	15	Commitment to provide a rich and varied curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils.	(E)	A/I
	17	Ability to develop, empower and support individuals and teams, to recognise and promote excellence and the skills and resilience to challenge poor performance across the school.	(E)	I
	18	Commitment, and ability, to implement an ethos of the highest standards of pupil behaviour, standards and welfare.	(E)	I
	19	Ability to implement strategies to celebrate diversity and to ensure inclusion, access and equality of opportunity so that all pupils achieve their full potential.	(D)	I
Systems and process	20	An understanding of how to create whole community accountability systems and implement them with the support of the Senior Leadership Team, combining rich data from a range of sources in order to maximise the achievement of pupils.	(E)	A/I
	21	Strong financial awareness and commercial acumen and the ability to understand, plan and manage the budget, with experience of making effective use of resources including the Pupil Premium, Sports and CIF Grants.	(E)	A/I
	22	Commitment and proven experience of effectively implementing procedures for safeguarding and promoting welfare of pupils and staff.	(E)	A/I
	23	Ability to develop and maintain effective relationships with the Chair of Governors and Governing Body to ensure effective governance and successful implementation of the Governing Body's responsibilities.	(E)	I
	24	Effective people management capabilities including the understanding of the role of appraisal, staff development and school improvement.	(E)	I
Self-improving school system	25	An understanding of, and sensitivity to the needs of all members of the school and the wider community. The ability to build trusting relationships and inspire commitment to support the academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.	(E)	A/I
	26	Ability to engage the school community in systematic and rigorous self-evaluation combining the outcomes of this with external evaluations to support the continuous development of the school.	(D)	I
	27	Commitment to collaborative working both internally and with other schools to improve outcomes, and the ability to develop opportunities, initiatives and partnerships to derive maximum benefit for the school and its stakeholders.	(D)	I
	28	Passionate about education, inclusion and success for all. Leading by example with optimism, empathy and integrity to	(E)	A/I

Personal qualities		inspire, motivate and generate trust in others and the ability to build and develop teams across schools.		
	29	Highly effective and creative communicator (oral and written) with the skills and confidence to negotiate and consult across a wide range of decision makers and partners.	(E)	A/I
	30	Ambitious, driven and resilient with a collegiate approach. High expectations and good judgement to recognise and reward professional excellence and recognise and deal effectively with poor performance.	(E)	I
	31	Ability to generate commitment and develop strong teams to manage change effectively.	(E)	I
Personal Effectiveness	32	Ability to be resilient and robust whilst also showing compassion in dealing with issues.	(E)	I
	33	Ability to remain calm under pressure.	(E)	I
	34	Demonstrate sound judgement and prioritise issues/risks effectively.	(E)	I
	35	Negotiate and consult effectively with the capacity to influence others.	(E)	I
	36	Inspire high levels of performance in all staff.	(E)	I
General Requirements	37	Able to work flexibly, including hours appropriate to achieve the Trust objectives.	(E)	
	38	Demonstrate a firm commitment to the concept of multi-academy trusts and a desire to see the Trust flourish and expand in a sustainable manner.	(E)	
	39	**Special Conditions** Post is subject to Child Protection Legislation and Enhanced DBS check.	(E)	Application Form (AF) Interview (IV) Assessment (Ass)
	40	Applicants must not be disqualified by law from holding directorship.	(E)	

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