



Candidate Pack

Head

Ashford School



ASHFORD SCHOOL
Inspiring Minds



Welcome

Thank you very much for your interest in becoming Head of Ashford School.

We are looking for an exceptional candidate to lead this well-established and highly successful all-through, co-educational independent day and boarding school.

Ashford School provides an excellent education for children from three months old in nursery up to the age of 18. It is both an excellent local school – competing successfully with independent and grammar schools to attract families across East Kent – and also a school with a well-developed international profile with boarding facilities serving pupils from both the UK and around the world.

At a time of unprecedented change for the independent sector, a role in our Group provides the right leader with a fantastic opportunity to thrive and build their reputation alongside that of the school's, with the support and structure of a leading Group behind them. Within this changing market that independent schools are now facing, we are developing a new strategy for the school, and the new Head will be an intrinsic part of this process. We are looking for someone who can meet the future demands of independent school families; who can win their trust and support; who can energise and inspire an excellent team of colleagues; who knows how to take what is already very good and develop it further; and who will be unrelenting in ensuring that every pupil receives the very best education.

As a Head within United Learning, you will be joining a team of dedicated colleagues across our Group of independent schools and academies who work collaboratively and share a vision of bringing out the best in everyone. If you share our ambition for this role and believe that you have appropriate mix of skills and experience, we look forward to receiving your application.

We want to become more diverse at senior levels, so particularly welcome applications from black and minority ethnic candidates and women, who are currently under-represented in senior positions in our Group and across the sector. Whoever you are, we will always appoint on merit and are open to discussing flexible working options.

With best wishes,

Sir Jon Coles, Chief Executive



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Working with United Learning; Leadership, Management and Governance

The Head of Ashford School reports to the Director of Independent Schools at United Learning, who is responsible to the overarching Charity Board through the Chief Executive.

Ashford School is part of United Learning, a large and growing group of schools aiming to offer a life-changing education to children and young people across England. United Learning is a diverse nationwide group of over 98 state and 14 independent schools, each with its own unique character and ethos.

With common 'back office' systems for finance, HR and management information, as well as central procurement and specialist estate management and HR support, the Group offers efficiency and effectiveness while also adding significant value in supporting schools and helping them to accelerate progress.

The key roles of Head of Senior, Head of Prep, Director of Finance & Operations and Director of Admissions all report directly to the Head who acts as a mentor, supporting and challenging them as appropriate whilst giving autonomy in the day-to-day running of their remits.

The Head will lead an Executive Team comprising the Head of Senior, Head of Prep School, Director of Finance & Operations, two Deputy Heads and one Assistant Head at the Senior School and two Deputy Heads and one Head of Pre-Prep at the Prep School.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for the Senior School comprises the Director of Finance & Operations, Head of Senior, Deputy Head, Deputy Head (DSL) and Assistant Head.

The Prep Senior Leadership Team (PSLT) comprises the Director of Finance & Operations, Head of Prep School, Deputy Head, Deputy Head (DDSL) and Head of Pre-Prep.

The School

Ashford School is an independent and inclusive co-educational school for pupils aged 0-18 years.

The Senior School occupies a 25+ acre site in a prominent position close to the centre of Ashford and near to Ashford International Station. It is a green and secure haven in a busy and growing commuter town. There are good rail, road and bus links to Ashford and London (38 minutes) and the School operates its own bus services to outlying villages.

The Senior School has playing fields on-site, together with a sports centre, gyms, fitness suite, an indoor swimming pool, floodlit astroturf, tennis and netball courts, boarding houses and refectory. The School enjoys all the specialist teaching facilities you would expect of an independent school and we are well into a continuing programme to refurbish and extend our facilities as we grow.

Recent projects have included the creation of a new Sixth Form Centre, a standalone Wellbeing Centre, the complete refurbishment of the School Hall and boarding house common rooms, the creation of a multi-use seminar room and significant security improvements across the site.

The Bridge Nursery for 0-4s is also located on this site and benefits from its proximity to the Senior School, as well as having its own dedicated and well-resourced accommodation and staff.

The Prep School and Stables Nursery sits in a stunning location on the edge of the village of Great Chart, with modern and specialist facilities. The Stables Nursery was opened in 2020 and represents an inspiring, state-of-the-art early years facility.

We pride ourselves on putting our pupils first, seeking to ensure that their talents and abilities are nurtured and encouraged, thus enabling them to achieve highly, develop personally and be successful in moving to the next step of their education.

Ashford School provides the perfect balance of academic strength and a genuinely broad education which includes excellence in sport as well as the creative and performing arts. We seek to bring out the 'Best in Everyone' in a supportive and glorious environment.

For further details about the school's ethos, facilities, curriculum, co-curriculum, pastoral care and safeguarding, the local governing body and the pupils' considerable academic and other achievements, please visit the school's website: www.ashfordschool.co.uk



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Academic Success

The Senior School

The Senior School uses the principles set out by the Skills Development Framework – a programme that has been developed to complement Ashford's existing curriculum.

In recent years, 41% of Ashford School pupils have gained places at one of the UK's Russell Group of universities and typically about 68% have achieved places at their first-choice university.

Over the last five years 64% of A Levels taken were graded A*/B and 34% were graded A*/A. The school achieves good value added scores at both levels. At GCSE, most pupils study nine or ten GCSEs including a modern foreign language. At A Level, pupils have a choice of over 25 subjects; the subjects we offer at A Level are those most valued by the leading universities; pupils normally study three or four A Levels and may add other qualifications such as the EPQ or TEFL.

BTEC Sport and CTEC Criminology are offered as an alternative to A Levels.

The Prep School

Ashford Prep School believes that learning should be the ultimate adventure. Effective pupil achievement and development is its main purpose, and alongside a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils learn through the many opportunities in the co-curricular programme and from the example set by staff.

The children are encouraged to take control of their own learning from the moment they join the School. Through the core skills of Thinking & Learning, Reviewing & Improving, Independence, Collaboration,

Leadership and Communicating, each child becomes a skilled and positive learner – allowing them opportunities to be challenged, grow in confidence and develop their love of learning.

Nurseries

There are three outstanding nurseries: the thriving Prep School Nursery (for 3s and 4s) is housed within the main Prep School building, with The Stables state of the art pre-nursery facility (for 0-2s) built in 2019, located on the same site. A second nursery, Bridge Nursery (0-2s) is co-located with the Senior School in the centre of Ashford and enjoys an excellent reputation locally.

Bridge and Stables Nurseries provide a home-away-from-home for our children, developing lifelong curiosity and confidence through play and adventure. Underpinned by the ethos of Inspiring Minds, the nurseries are designed to ensure that each child has the opportunity to learn within their developmental capability. Our intention is to ensure that the nursery provision provides an enriching environment with a team of staff who form secure bonds with the children. This promotes feelings of stability and safety which ultimately enables our children to become confident learners.

The Prep School Nursery follows the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, which covers the areas of Personal, Emotional and Social Development, Communication and Language, Physical Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design. All of this is aimed at supporting a seamless transition into the Prep School.



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Pastoral Support

In the Senior School, form tutors play a pivotal role, and peer-to-peer support is provided through a system of buddies, peer mentors, year prefects and prefects.

At Prep, children have a nominated “go to” person, in addition to their form tutor. Our pupils feel confident they have access to a vast support network, so that they always have someone they feel comfortable talking to.

Our Health and Wellbeing Centre offers a holistic approach to the physical, psychological and spiritual health and wellbeing of every pupil. The school is fortunate enough to have access to the expertise of the team of nurses, a school doctor, two counsellors and a school chaplain.

We have a thriving international boarding community of 82 boarders. Boarding creates the opportunity for pupils to live, work, and enjoy themselves. They develop skills for life, helping and supporting one another and form lifelong friendships. As in all areas of the School, our boarding provision is underpinned by a strong pastoral support system.

Pupils are cared for in a friendly and stimulating environment with an excellent range of facilities and opportunities. A wide range of activities and trips encourages our pupils to take risks and challenge themselves to discover strengths, talents and skills which will further develop their independence, self-confidence, and determination.

Co-Curricular

The School prides itself on the extensive range of co-curricular activities – over 90 are offered in total every week. The dominant areas of the programme are sport, music, drama and creative arts, but it also features options ranging from coding, debating and Lego, to sign language, touch typing, pop choir and Dungeons and Dragons. Outdoor activities are also a prominent feature of the co-curriculum, including the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and the Combined Cadet Force, which is run in partnership with another school.

The School has received national and regional recognition in many areas of sport and there are over 800 sports fixtures played from under 9 through to under 18 every year.

A whole school arts festival takes place during the summer term, showcasing the creative talent of over a third of the school. Pupils and staff are expected to contribute fully to the co-curricular life at the school.





The Role

As Head, you will have the unique and exciting opportunity to take an intrinsic role in helping to develop a new strategy for the whole school from Nursery to Sixth form. To lead and inspire excellence across both the Prep and Senior Schools from both teachers and pupils. You will provide high quality strategic school leadership support, creating a culture of mutual learning and collaboration among staff and pupils.

As a senior leader within United Learning, the Head, together with the Local Governing Body (LGB), will be responsible for establishing and implementing the vision and direction for all pupils from nursery to Sixth Form. In leading the school, the Head will ensure that United Learning's ethos and values are deeply embedded and visible, securing 'the best in everyone' for both staff and pupils.

The main responsibilities of the role are:

Educational Leadership and Management

- Lead and support the delivery of the taught curriculum, ensuring that it is relevant, engaging, and inclusive for all pupils across the schools;
- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently effective and evidence-based, and that pupil outcomes are monitored and evaluated rigorously;
- Foster a culture of excellence, innovation, and collaboration among staff and pupils, and promote the trust values;
- Work with other leaders and stakeholders to ensure that the trust vision and strategic priorities are aligned and communicated effectively;
- Establish and maintain a robust system of assessment and data analysis that informs teaching and learning and enables the tracking and reporting of pupil progress and attainment;
- Create and celebrate opportunities for pupils to showcase their learning and achievements, and to participate in extra-curricular and enrichment activities;
- Evidencing knowledge of primary and secondary educational practice;
- Ensuring the welfare and safety of all pupils from all groups, and that the School is fully compliant with DfE and local authority Child Protection and Safeguarding regulations and best practice.

Strategic Leadership

- Defining and delivering the vision and objectives of the School and the School Strategic Plan as agreed with the LGB and the Director of Independent Schools;
- Leading the School in partnership with the LGB and United Learning senior leaders;
- Agreeing, communicating and delivering aspirational short and medium term aims within the context of the longer-term vision;
- Developing and maintaining the values of United Learning within the school;
- Contributing professionally to the broader United Learning agenda;
- Keeping up-to-date on policy developments ensuring that Ashford School seizes the opportunities that national and local changes will continue to present;
- Leading a creative, innovative, research-led and responsive curriculum, ensuring that Ashford School continues to be known for academic, pastoral and co-curricular excellence;
- Leading whole school development.

The Role

People Leadership and Management

- Develop, be a role model for, evaluate the impact of senior leaders and hold leadership accountable for pupil outcomes;
- Empower and develop other leaders and staff and encourage them to take ownership of their roles and responsibilities;
- Create and maintain a positive and supportive working environment for all staff across your schools;
- Champion flexible working, professional development, and well-being initiatives;
- Model and uphold high standards of conduct and performance and provide regular and constructive feedback to staff;
- Lead and facilitate professional learning communities that support staff to share and develop their pedagogical practice and subject knowledge;
- Develop and implement a comprehensive and coherent staff development strategy that supports the recruitment, retention, and progression of high-quality staff across your schools;
- Provide staff with the necessary resources, digital support, and physical learning spaces to deliver effective and engaging teaching and learning, and to work collaboratively with colleagues;
- Be responsible for setting clear and realistic expectations and objectives for staff and conducting regular and meaningful PDRs.

Financial and Business Management

- Work closely with the senior leaders and Director of Finance and Operations to ensure budgets are set and managed within guidelines agreed with the Director of Finance – Independent Schools;
- Ensure marketing and admissions departments are run and managed efficiently to maximise pupil recruitment;
- Develop shared resources strategy across the schools and actively pursue opportunities to share back-office services and thus streamline costs;
- Manage and utilise the site and facilities to their full value to the school, the Group and the community;
- Ensure that health and safety policies are fully implemented and managed;

- Implementing key Group-wide policies and strategies (e.g., in relation to Compliance, Finance, HR and Technology);
- Working closely with the Director of Admissions to ensure a strong pipeline of pupil recruitment;
- Ensuring that efficient administrative systems are implemented and managed.

Great Contribution Beyond the Group

- As a Head, you will engage and collaborate with the wider community, including parents, carers, local authorities, and other educational partners;
- Ensure that strong and effective partnerships with feeder schools are developed and maintained;
- You will promote the Trust reputation and profile as a positive and proactive contributor to local events and activities;
- You will seek and share best practice and learning opportunities with other MATs and schools and contribute to the development of the education sector;
- You will act as an ambassador for the trust ethos and values and demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and inclusion.

The Person

The Head will demonstrate the following experience, skills, knowledge and personal attributes.

Education and Training

- Educational and professional qualifications appropriate for the role of Head. Such qualifications would normally include an excellent first degree from a recognised university, professional qualifications (including PGCE/QTS) and ideally a further post graduate qualification;
- Evidence of professional development and a commitment to continuing professional development across career to date.

Experience

- Demonstrable success in a senior leadership role in a comparable organisation and through significant periods of development;
- A demonstrable personal record of outstanding teaching and experience in curriculum development;
- A proven track record of achievement in raising standards through, for example, using target setting, data analysis and curriculum innovation to improve and monitor performance;
- Evidence of the ability to develop excellent relationships with children, young people and adults;
- Experience in leading and developing colleagues and effective teams;
- Experience of pupil recruitment;
- An understanding, not necessarily gained through considerable direct experience, in all-age schools, across the 4-18 range.

Knowledge, Skills and Qualities

- An in-depth understanding of school leadership and school improvement needed to achieve outstanding pupil progress and personal development;
- A thorough understanding of a Head's responsibilities in relation to regulatory matters including Safeguarding and Child Protection issues and a clear commitment to delivering best practice in Safeguarding;

- The ability to create and implement effective management systems in which roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly articulated;
- Proficient IT skills with an understanding of and commitment to the role of digital technology in teaching and learning;
- An understanding of the importance of research in developing approaches to learning and curriculum design and the ability to put this into practice;
- An understanding of expectations of all phases of education;
- A capacity to understand the complexities of the market for Ashford School, the analysis required, and the skills to implement successful marketing strategies;
- The interpersonal and relational skills to operate as a compelling ambassador for the School;
- The skills to run an inclusive and diverse school community, valuing and promoting inclusion.

Personal Qualities

- Belief in equality of opportunities for all pupils and staff regardless of culture, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religious identity;
- Clarity of vision with the ability to communicate it in a compelling and engaging way;
- An adaptable leadership style which encourages leadership from others and celebrates success;
- Determination and resilience;
- Sensitivity and wisdom in managing relationships with pupils, parents and staff;
- High level interpersonal and communication skills with the capacity to influence at all levels;
- High expectations of pupil achievement, conduct and behaviour;
- A commitment to collaborative working, both within the school and across the Group with a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the development of the United Learning values and ethos.

Terms & Conditions of Employment

Employer

United Learning

Position

Head, Ashford School

Reporting Line

Director of Independent Schools, United Learning

Location

Ashford, Kent

Start Date

1 September 2027

Starting Salary

The salary will be commensurate with the significance and importance of the post and the experience of the successful candidate.

Holidays

You are entitled to take holidays during the normal school holidays except where your presence is required for proper execution of your duties as Head. United Learning would expect you would not have less than six weeks of the year without any work involvement.

Health Insurance

The Head is eligible to be a member of United Learning's medical insurance scheme, currently with BUPA. It is also possible for other family members to be included within the policy but, when this happens, there is a charge.

Ill Health

United Learning's sick leave and pay policy will apply. The policy allows for a three years' sliding qualification period, at the end of which you will be entitled to full pay for 100 working days and half pay for 100 working days.

Relocation

Assistance with relocation may be negotiable up to £8000. The final detailed terms and conditions are subject to agreement between United Learning and the successful candidate and will be reflected in the formal employment contract.

Safeguarding

United Learning is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers, the Disclosure and Barring Service and online searches.

Benefits

We encourage flexible working and offer opportunities where it meets the needs of the role. We also have a wide range of benefits, including a Health Cash Plan which gives you money back on essential healthcare, discount schemes that save you money, as well as access to an Employee Assistance Programme, discounted gym memberships, cycle purchase and car leasing.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Head is eligible to be a member of the TPS or may opt to join our APTIS scheme.

The final detailed terms and conditions are subject to agreement between United Learning and the successful candidate and will be reflected in the formal employment contract.

Our Ethos

Our approach to education is underpinned by a sense of moral purpose and commitment to doing what is right for children and young people. We believe in supporting our colleagues to achieve excellence and in acting with integrity in all our dealings within and beyond the Group. We believe the safety and welfare of all children and young people is paramount. We summarise this ethos as ‘**the best in everyone**’ which underpins our core values:

Ambition – to achieve the best for us and others.

Confidence – to have the courage of our convictions and to take risks for the right cause.

Creativity – to imagine possibilities and make them real.

Respect – of ourselves and others in all that we do.

Enthusiasm – to seek opportunity, find what is good and pursue talents and interests.

Determination – to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

As a single organisation, we seek to bring together the best of independent and state sectors, respecting both traditions and learning from each other. We believe that each of our schools is and should be distinctive – committed to developing its own strengths and identity while sharing our core values to promote service, compassion and generosity.

Continuing Professional Development

We believe that successful organisations make a priority of developing their staff; all the more so in education, where the people of the organisation are its most important asset. While the development of all staff is important, we make the support and professional development of Heads and senior leaders a particular priority, given the impact that leaders have on the life of staff and pupils alike.

We work on the basis that each of us, however effective, can always improve. The successful candidate of Ashford School will be set personal development objectives with the Regional Director each year and will be supported to achieve them.

The Head will also be asked to take a role in supporting the leadership of the whole organisation, working with other Heads in the Group, and sharing ideas and practice with one another.

They will also have the benefit of accessing a range of networks, including the Group Education Forum, which brings together Heads from across the Group six times a year. United Learning are passionate about staff development, for example we provide 360-degree feedback as part of professional development, and we have also commissioned training programmes from major universities.

We believe that schools are at their best when they are autonomous and able to develop a distinctive ethos, reflecting the needs of their pupils and the context within which they work. The Group can get behind the work of Heads and leaders in schools through creating strong networks, providing outstanding educational support and professional development, and by taking the strain of professional functional support. We aim to ensure that the technology, finance, HR and data support is provided more effectively and efficiently than would otherwise be possible, so that Heads can focus on educational leadership.

The newly appointed Head at Ashford School will also benefit from a comprehensive induction programme which has recently been reviewed to ensure it is effective and to promote success.

How to Apply

If you wish to discover more about this exciting opportunity, need any further information or would like to have an informal discussion please contact Sarah Askew, PA to the Independent School Team, by email on sarah.askew@unitedlearning.org.uk to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak with Fiona Boulton, Director of Independent Schools.

All applications should be submitted via our careers page: www.ashfordschool.co.uk/about-us/vacancies/

The closing date for receipt of completed applications is 11.59pm on Sunday 1 November.

The Selection Process

We will treat all enquiries, formal and informal, in confidence.
The selection process will be as follows:

All applications will be acknowledged by email. Shortlisting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 4 November 2026.

The selection process will take place on **Thursday 12 November** and **Tuesday 17 November** at Ashford School. You do need to be available for both dates.

Candidates will be offered full feedback on their application and/or interview.



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Ashford Prep School | Great Chart | Ashford | Kent TN23 3DJ

Ashford Senior School | East Hill | Ashford | Kent TN24 8PB
