



FOREST
SCHOOL

Appointment of Chief Operating Officer

April 2026 | Ref: LAGVC

Welcome from the Warden

Forest is an extraordinary organisation. Building on our long heritage, we are proudly ambitious, agile to change, and sufficiently forward thinking to enable us to be at the forefront of all that we do and offer.

We are excited to be in a position to recruit a Chief Operating Officer as Forest enters the next stage of its evolution. As we look to the future, we are focused on remaining agile, resilient and well-placed to respond to change, while continuing to deliver excellence across all areas of the school.

The successful candidate will join a highly experienced Executive Team, bringing a diverse mix of educational and industry backgrounds. Together, the team will collaborate to embed a strong strategic vision and through its effective leadership ensure that Forest is well governed, well managed and prepared for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

With a strong community spirit and emphasis on service, joining Forest means becoming part of an inclusive, supportive and caring organisation. We want everyone to flourish, fulfil their potential, feel valued and have a sense of belonging. Happiness is positively correlated with motivation and achievement. The strength of the social connections which our pupils develop with their teachers and peers is a testament to this.

We believe that it is important to find the right level of challenge for each pupil so that they are engaged but not overwhelmed. Our focus on the holistic development of the individual ensures they recognise the importance of working hard, being part of a team, and being aspirational for themselves. Through our co-curricular and wellbeing programmes we place great emphasis on the development of soft skills such as problem-solving, resilience, flexibility and self reflection.

Our academic ethos is simple – we want pupils to master their subjects, be intellectually curious, to think creatively and understand how they learn and subsequently grow into great life-long learners. We aim to ensure that when our pupils leave Forest to step into a world that is constantly changing, they are confident individuals who are willing to take responsibility and have the right mindset and skills to equip them for success at each stage of their lives. I very much look forward to welcoming you to Forest so that you can experience the warmth and vibrancy of our community for yourself.



Welcome to Forest School

A leading co-educational day school for pupils from 4-18 years

Founded in 1834, Forest is a group of schools educating over 1500 pupils aged 4 to 18 across co-located Prep and Senior Schools in Walthamstow, East London. Set within 50 acres of grounds on the edge of Epping Forest — one of London's most remarkable natural landscapes — Forest occupies a truly unique position: a busy, ambitious group of schools with the space, greenery and character of somewhere altogether different. With central London just half an hour away and excellent transport links on the doorstep, Forest combines the energy and opportunity of the capital with a campus that feels genuinely special.

Forest draws its pupils from a broad range of backgrounds, reflecting the rich demographic diversity of Central, North and East London, and this diversity is something Forest wears with pride. It is a genuinely inclusive community, one that knows its pupils and knows itself, placing the individual child at the centre of all it does and promoting a clear set of values: growth, learning, hard work, responsibility, wellbeing, community and diversity.

Forest is a busy, happy and purposeful learning environment. Pupils are academically aspirational but unpretentious, understanding that achievement is the product of hard work, intellectual curiosity and genuine engagement rather than entitlement. The School's academic philosophy is given shape through the Forest Learner framework, which equips pupils not just with strong examination results but with the mindset, strategies and love of learning needed to thrive at the most demanding universities and beyond. The relationship between the academic, the co-curricular and the pastoral is understood and nurtured as central to each pupil's all-round development — and it is this holistic approach, combined with a warm and inclusive community spirit, that defines the Forest experience.



Forest School

where people grow



Values and Aims

Forest knows its pupils and knows itself. It puts the individual child at the centre of all it does and promotes a clear set of values, which underpin the Forest culture.

GROWTH

LEARNING

HARD WORK

DIVERSITY

RESPONSIBILITY

WELLBEING

COMMUNITY

The Forest Learner

The Forest Learner is the framework that sits at the heart of teaching and learning at Forest. Its ethos is straightforward but ambitious: academic mastery is about far more than achieving high grades, it is about pupils genuinely understanding their subjects, knowing how they learn best, and developing the mindset and skills to become confident, lifelong learners.

The skills and dispositions of a great learner are articulated in our Forest learner framework:

- *Take responsibility for their learning*
- *Know where they are going*
- *Understand how to get there*

Crucially, the Forest approach goes beyond character traits like grit and resilience; it is grounded in evidence-informed teaching practice, drawing on the research of leading educationalists including Professor John Hattie, Dylan William, Daisy Christodoulou and cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham. Teaching at Forest is deliberately challenging — encouraging what the School describes as "cognitive wobble and conflict," pushing pupils into the "learning pit" and helping them understand that risk, frustration and confusion are a normal and productive part of the learning process.

The goal is not simply strong examination results, though those follow — it is to equip pupils with the foundational knowledge, intellectual confidence and expert learning strategies needed to access and thrive at the most demanding universities and workplaces in the world, and to continue learning long after they leave the School's gates.



RESPONSIBILITY | DIRECTION | STRATEGIES



THE GOOD SCHOOLS GUIDE

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“A flourishing, successful and well-led school in a glorious, green setting with consistently strong results that don’t require pupils to sacrifice happiness or wellbeing on the way to achieving them. A must-see option for parents wanting an education that’s so genuinely rounded you could make hoops from it.”

Academics

At Forest, the approach to education is holistic, recognising that academic excellence extends far beyond grades and test scores alone.

Forest's academic ethos is rooted in a clear and ambitious philosophy: that pupils should master their subjects, understand how they learn best, and leave Forest as confident, lifelong learners equipped to thrive in a rapidly changing world. This is given shape through the Forest Learner framework, which focuses on pupils taking responsibility for their own learning, knowing where they are going and understanding how to get there — a set of dispositions grounded in the research of leading educationalists and embedded across the curriculum.

The commitment to equipping students with resilience, complex problem-solving, collaboration, creativity and emotional intelligence sits alongside a rightly strong pride in their pupils' outstanding successes in public examinations, with Forest learners achieving excellent grades each year. In the Sixth Form, pupils benefit from a broad range of A-Level options and the support to identify the academic pathway best suited to them, with leavers going on to access some of the most demanding universities and workplaces in the world.

It is an academic culture that takes results seriously whilst never losing sight of the deeper purpose: to develop curious, resilient, intellectually confident young people who are ready to make their mark beyond the Forest's gates.

GCSE

32%

of grades were 9

78%

of grades were 9/8

“Academic attainment is high overall, with GCSE and A-level results well above the national average. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs make very good progress from their starting points.”

ISI Report 2024

88% of Forest students took up places at Russell Group and UK Top 10 universities. Around 90% were placed at the university destination of their choice. Others secured prestigious and highly competitive degree-level apprenticeships, musical conservatoires, and drama schools.

A Level

49%

of all grades were A-A*

81%

of all grades were B-A*





Pastoral Care and Co-Curricular Life

At Forest, pastoral care is not an add-on to school life — it is central to it. Forest's goal is to produce well-rounded young people who become the very best versions of themselves, and success is not defined in a single form: pupils are celebrated for their individual talents. The starting point for the pastoral approach is a simple but powerful principle: that every pupil is known, liked and valued. This is given structure through the House system, which plays a major role in the life of every Forest pupil, providing a consistent source of community, identity and support from the earliest years through to the Sixth Form. Tutors meet with their groups daily and hold regular one-to-one conversations to monitor academic progress and personal wellbeing.

For those who need additional support, Forest partners with Place2Be — providing professional counselling alongside the pastoral team — and Sixth Formers have access to Place2Talk for confidential conversations outside of the teacher relationship. All Year 12 pupils also undertake an eight-week course in mindfulness, giving them a practical toolkit for managing stress as they navigate the demands of Sixth Form life.

The co-curricular offer at Forest is equally rich and purposeful. The co-curriculum is a crucial part of life and learning at Forest, with pupils encouraged to try new things, explore new places, learn new skills and experience real challenge. Clubs and societies run before school, at lunchtime and after school, covering a wide range of interests from sport, music and drama to mythology, street food, coding and astronomy. Pupils are actively encouraged to start their own clubs, and Forest's partnership with external experts — including elite sports coaches and professional musicians performing at sold-out venues — brings an additional dimension to the programme.

Sport is a particular strength, with competitive teams across hockey, football, cricket, netball, swimming, tennis, athletics and basketball, supported by excellent on-site facilities. The expressive arts are equally vibrant, with drama, dance and art all featuring prominently, and Forest's longstanding partnership with the Hackney Empire providing a distinctive and high-profile performance platform. Beyond the campus, an extensive programme of educational visits takes pupils from the classroom to destinations both domestic and abroad, working in partnership with the co-curricular programme and subject curriculums. Together, the pastoral and co-curricular strands of school life at Forest reflect a community that genuinely believes in developing the whole person — and that happiness, belonging and breadth of experience are inseparable from academic success.

Facilities and School Grounds

Forest is a group of London schools like no other — busy city schools set within over 50 acres of grounds, surrounded by Epping Forest, offering pupils a taste of two very different worlds.

The campus is a compelling blend of historic and contemporary, with buildings spanning nearly two centuries of development. The Chapel of St John Baptist, built in 1857, sits alongside the magnificent Grade II listed Dining Hall, whilst more recent additions include the Sylvestrian Leisure Centre, opened in 2008, the Martin Centre for Innovation in 2013, and a fully refurbished Science block in 2016.

Forest also owns a further 25 acres of sports grounds, known as the Park, accessible through the forest, which provides football and cricket pitches, athletics tracks and an all-weather Astro Turf facility. The sports provision on the main campus is equally impressive: state-of-the-art facilities include a sports hall with four badminton courts, a gymnasium, two permanent indoor cricket nets with video analysis technology, a 25-metre indoor swimming pool, a recently refurbished fitness suite, a full-size all-weather pitch, netball courts, eight football pitches and a dance studio.

Beyond their educational purpose, Forest's facilities also serve as a significant commercial asset. Due to its stunning location on the edge of the forest, Forest has become a popular venue for weddings, christenings, parties, conferences, corporate events, filming and theatre productions — a revenue stream that represents a meaningful opportunity for the incoming COO to develop and grow. Forest is also well connected, with Snaresbrook tube station a ten-minute walk away, placing the School just 28 minutes from Oxford Circus on the Central Line.



The Role

Responsible to: The Warden

Responsible for: Director of Operations and Compliance, Head of Estates, Chief Accountant, Senior Finance Manager, Deputy Director of IT

Salary: Competitive

Accommodation: School accommodation available

Purpose of the Role

The COO will serve as the Warden's strategic partner, providing the operational leadership and commercial rigour needed to underpin Forest School's continued growth and development. Day to day, the role oversees the centralised operational services that support the School group, including Finance, IT, Estates, and Operations and Compliance. Beyond business-as-usual delivery, the COO will play an active and influential role in the School's future strategic planning, including supporting any further merger and acquisition activity, ensuring that Forest remains operationally excellent, financially resilient and well positioned for the opportunities ahead.

Strategy and Leadership

- Work in close partnership with the Warden to develop and deliver the School's strategic vision, acting as a trusted and collegiate executive partner.
- Lead, inspire and develop the senior operational management team, fostering a culture of empowerment, accountability and continuous improvement consistent with the School's values.
- Support the evaluation and execution of future growth opportunities, including merger and acquisition activity, bringing commercial rigour and strategic insight to the process.
- Act as an active and visible member of the senior leadership team, contributing to whole-school decision-making and representing the operational function at Governor level where appropriate.

Finance

- Provide strategic oversight of the School's financial management, working closely with the Chief Accountant and Senior Finance Manager to ensure robust financial planning, forecasting and reporting.
- Ensure strong budgetary control and financial discipline across the School group, with appropriate governance and compliance with all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Lead on financial modelling and scenario planning to support strategic development, fee strategy and capital investment decisions.
- Oversee procurement and purchasing, ensuring appropriate processes are in place for evaluating suppliers and managing expenditure.
- Ensure the School has appropriate insurance and risk management frameworks in place across all insurable risks.

Operations and Compliance

- Take overall responsibility for operational service delivery across the School group, including estates, facilities, health and safety and IT.
- Ensure full compliance with all relevant legal, regulatory and safeguarding obligations, maintaining robust policies and frameworks across all operational functions.
- Lead on the School's health and safety culture, working with the Head of Estates and specialist advisors to ensure the highest standards of safety for pupils, staff and visitors.
- Oversee the development and maintenance of the School's estate, coordinating capital projects, maintenance programmes and sustainability initiatives.

Technology

- Provide strategic oversight of IT and digital infrastructure through the Deputy Director of IT, ensuring systems are fit for purpose, secure and aligned to the School's operational and educational needs.
- Champion the intelligent use of technology to drive operational efficiency and improve the experience of pupils, staff and families.

The Person

Essential Experience and Background

- A proven track record as a senior leader in a commercial, entrepreneurial or growth-oriented organisation — education sector experience is not required.
- Demonstrable experience of operating at a strategic level, including involvement in business growth, organisational development or merger and acquisition activity.
- Strong commercial and financial acumen, with the ability to balance strategic ambition with financial discipline.
- Experience of leading and developing multi-disciplinary teams, with a track record of empowering others and driving a culture of high performance.
- A self-starter who can hit the ground running, without requiring significant mentoring or onboarding support from the Warden.

Personal Style and Values

- Collegiate, open and values-driven — someone who leads through influence, builds trust and champions an inclusive and transparent culture.
- Entrepreneurial in mindset: curious, energetic and comfortable with ambiguity and change.
- An exceptional number two: someone who finds genuine fulfilment in supporting and enabling the vision of a strong leader, without personal ambition for the top role.
- Emotionally intelligent, with strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build productive relationships across a diverse school community.
- Committed to the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Genuinely aligned with the values and mission of an independent school — a belief that everything the organisation does should ultimately serve the education, wellbeing and development of its pupils.







Terms of Appointment

A competitive package accompanies the post, dependent on experience.

Address: Forest School, London, E17 3PY

Safeguarding:

Forest is committed to safeguarding young people and promoting the welfare of children. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening and safer recruitment checks appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service. All positions within the school are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

How to Apply

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

Candidates should apply for this role via roles.saxbam.com using code LAGVC. 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 equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application

The closing date for applications is noon 21nd May

GDPR personal data notice:

According to GDPR guidelines, Saxton Bampfylde Ltd 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.



Saxton Bampfylde



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