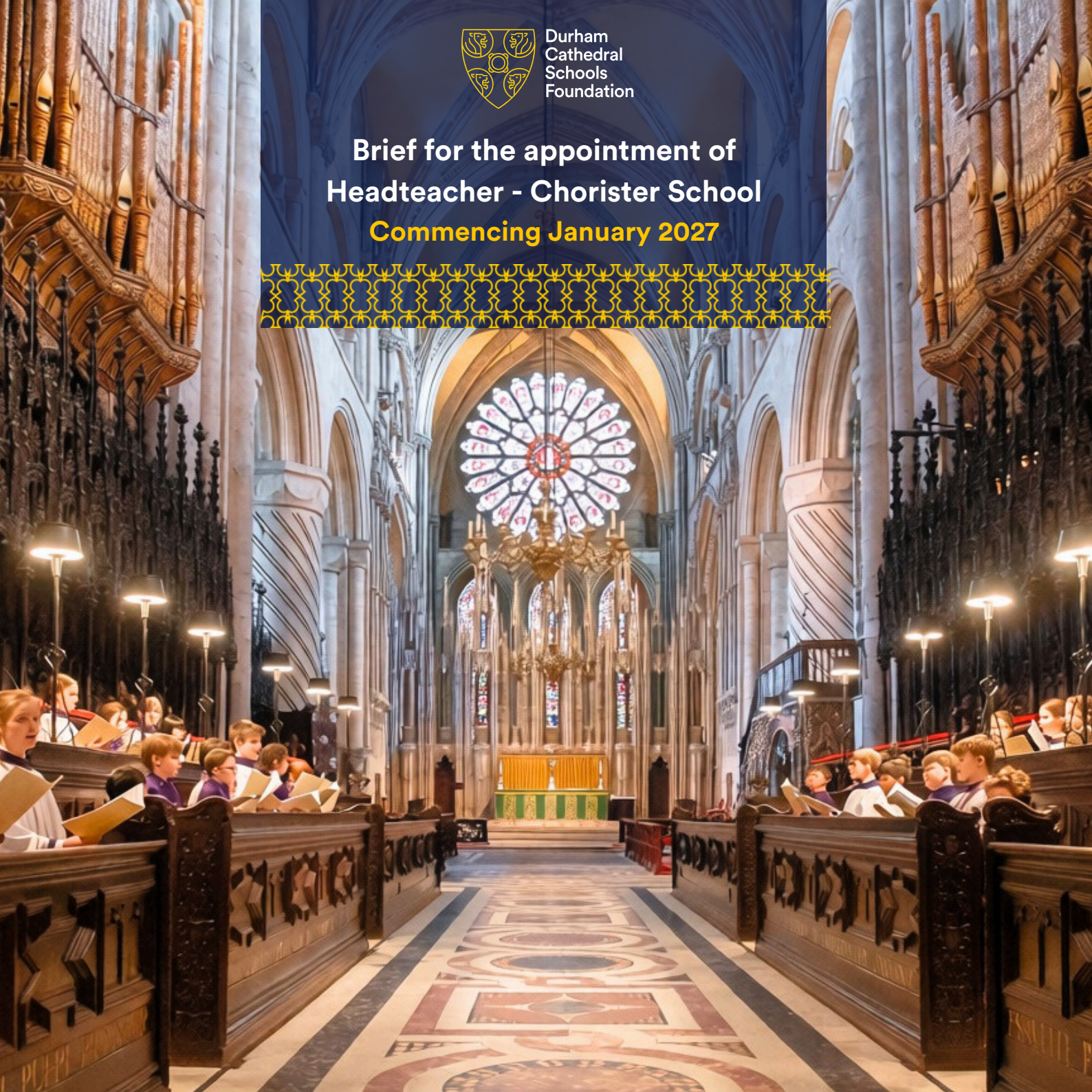




Durham  
Cathedral  
Schools  
Foundation

**Brief for the appointment of  
Headteacher - Chorister School  
Commencing January 2027**



# Table Of Contents

|                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| Welcome from The Chair of Governors..... | 3  |
| An Introduction to The Foundation.....   | 4  |
| A Word from the Principal.....           | 6  |
| Traditionally Modern.....                | 7  |
| World Class Location.....                | 8  |
| Our Values.....                          | 9  |
| Introduction to Chorister School.....    | 12 |
| Job Description.....                     | 14 |
| Role Profile.....                        | 18 |
| Leadership and Governance.....           | 20 |
| Further Information.....                 | 21 |

# Welcome from the Chair



Thank you for your interest in the Headship of Chorister School within the Durham Cathedral Schools' Foundation.

Formed through the coming together of two of the North of England's most historic schools, with origins dating back over centuries, the Foundation represents a rare combination of heritage, ambition and opportunity. While grounded in a distinguished past, we are firmly focused on the future, bringing together centres of excellence in academic study, the arts and sport to create a dynamic and forward-looking educational environment.

In a period of challenge across the independent sector, we stand on strong foundations: healthy pupil numbers, excellent academic outcomes and a growing international footprint. This provides a compelling platform for an exceptional individual to lead Chorister School and to build further momentum, strengthen our market position and shape a distinctive and enduring legacy.

Alongside Durham Cathedral, we act as custodians of the Cathedral Choir, a centuries' old tradition of service, worship and excellence. Our culture is defined by high expectations and strong pastoral care, underpinned by our MARK values. It is an environment in which pupils are supported to achieve at the highest levels while developing the confidence and character for life beyond school.

Situated within the remarkable setting of Durham's UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Foundation offers a unique and prestigious context for leadership. This is an opportunity to lead an organisation of substance and potential at a pivotal moment in its development.

We look forward to welcoming a new Headteacher at Chorister School who will share our ambition and confidently support the Foundation's drive into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Dobson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent 'S' and 'D'.

**Simon Dobson**  
Chair of Governors

# An Introduction to the Foundation

Based in the beautiful, historic and inspiring City of Durham, Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation (DCSF) provides a forward-thinking and contemporary boarding and day education for around 700 boys and girls aged 3 to 18.

DCSF was formed in 2021 as a result of the merger between Durham School and The Chorister School. A unique and purposeful family of schools, today Durham School (for pupils aged 11 to 18) and Chorister School (for pupils aged 3 to 11) enjoy strong links with the Cathedral and proudly educate the boys and girls who make up the Cathedral Choir. Both schools have been at the heart of the City's education landscape for over six centuries, with Durham School re-founded in 1414 by Bishop Thomas Langley as a School 'for grammar and song'. Durham School was originally located next to Durham Cathedral on Palace Green, but moved to its current position, across the River Wear but with breath taking views of its former Cathedral site, in 1844.

The School's boat club is the third oldest in the world and its rugby club the fourth oldest, and the Foundation continues to enjoy great success across the breadth of its diverse co-curricular provision today.

Chorister School is situated at our Cathedral Site, nestled in the grounds of Durham Cathedral in the unparalleled UNESCO Durham World Heritage Site, made even more famous in recent years as a location for Hogwarts in the Harry Potter film franchise.

The Foundation's motto "Confidence for life. Respect for all" guides the culture and is at the heart of its commitment to combining academic excellence with an extensive co-curricular programme to develop mature and responsible young men and women, imbued with the skills required to tackle the challenges ahead of them.

Staff and pupils take full advantage of every opportunity the City of Durham offers. Durham is a small and compact City, with a bustling centre, tranquil and leafy riverside footpaths along the banks of the Wear, and sights of historic and cultural significance. These, combined with the strong links DCSF enjoys with the University, give pupils unparalleled opportunities to hear leading figures speak, to attend workshops and lectures and to be inspired by their surroundings.

## **Durham International Schools**

DCSF has three overseas sister schools which were founded to deliver an outstanding and well-rounded education to young people around the world. They are currently located in Dubai, Kenya and Qatar.

Durham School for Girls is the first British branch all-girls school in Qatar and was the first of the overseas schools. Durham Kenya is an international nursery and pre-prep delivering the UK's Early Years Foundation Stage and English National Curriculum to children aged 1-11, with an ambition to extend its provision to incorporate senior education in due course. Durham Dubai currently educates boys and girls aged 3-14 and will open its Sixth Form in September 2026. Further International Schools are under discussion as part of DCSF's plans to expand this portfolio.



# A Word from the Principal

In so many ways, all schools are similar and yet all schools claim to be different; so what is the unique quality that makes Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation distinctive?

In short, we compete. In comparison to most schools, DCSF is small, but we do not let that stand in our way. Pupils here do lots of things that revolve around their education: sport, music, drama, outdoor pursuits, and so the list goes on. Pupils represent the school at county, national, and international levels, achieving impressive standards in all that they do and competing with the best of them.



Pupils dedicate time to these activities because they are fun and enhance CVs but, more importantly, because they develop the pupils as people; they learn to compete, they learn to win, and they learn what to do when they fail or lose. Balancing all this with academic work is never easy but pupils learn from the very beginning that examinations cannot get in the way of an education that will last a lifetime.

There are many tasks which might compete as the most important for any headteacher, but getting the right people on the bus is not only a privilege but also the guarantee that DCSF remains distinctive and all that it is. The teachers here dedicate themselves to their pupils, they inspire questioning and a love of learning, and contribute to a warm and lively community.

*Mr. P. Alderson.*

Michael Alderson  
Principal



## Traditionally Modern

Learning has been part of the life of Durham for a thousand years. The Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation was formed in 2021 as a result of the merger between Durham School and The Chorister School.

Both Schools have been at the heart of the City's education for most of that time; re-endowed in the early fifteenth century as schools for 'grammar and song' by Bishop Thomas Langley, Durham School was again re-founded by Henry VIII in 1541.

In a somewhat odd local tradition, the Cathedral is often known as Abbey, especially by Dunelmians and Old Dunelmians.

# A World Class Location

“I got off at Durham, intending to poke around the Cathedral for an hour or so and fell in love with it instantly in a serious way. Why, it’s wonderful – a perfect little City – and I kept thinking: ‘Why did no-one tell me about this?’ I knew, of course, that it had a fine Norman Cathedral but had no idea that it was so splendid. I couldn’t believe that not once in twenty years had anyone said to me, ‘You’ve never been to Durham? Good God, man, you must go at once! Please – take my car.’ I had read countless travel pieces in Sunday papers about weekends away at York, Canterbury, Norwich, even Lincoln, but I couldn’t remember reading a single one about Durham, and when I asked friends about it, I found hardly anyone who had ever been there. So let me say it now: if you have never been to Durham, go at once. Take my car. It’s wonderful.”

Bill Bryson, Notes from a Small Island



# M

## MORAL INTEGRITY

We have the courage to say and do the right thing

We demonstrate a will to do the right thing

We can be relied upon to do the right thing

We act in private as we do in public

We stand firm for what is right

We challenge things we think wrong and are open to challenge from others

We are accountable for failure as well as success, and do not allocate blame

We demonstrate and promote honesty, and are true to ourselves



# A

## AMBITION

We achieve our goals by consistently working toward them

We go above and beyond the call of duty

We re ambitious when we set goals for ourselves

We seek help and support before giving up and identify lessons in setbacks

We encourage all to develop maximum potential and support others to achieve

We embrace opportunities, challenge, and seek to develop our skills and talents

We identify opportunities for School Development



# R

## RESPONSIBILITY

We do what we say we will

We are punctual and prompt in all that we do

We use our resources responsibly, developing and caring for our environment

We act before being asked and consistently deliver on expectations

We prepare thoroughly for all tasks

We are accountable for our actions

We encourage autonomy in all and seek leadership

We acknowledge and seek to resolve problems

We pioneer better ways of doing things



# K

## KINDNESS

We are open and approachable to all, no matter their gender, faith, race or background

We welcome and listen to the opinions of others and look to engage and involve a diverse range of views in the community

We attend to and include newcomers and those needing help, and actively build relationships

We support each other and stand up for fellow colleagues and pupils

We acknowledge individual needs within our diverse and inclusive community

We speak positively of the School community, and are positive in responding to questions



# Our Values

For over 600 years, Durham Cathedral Schools' Foundation has prepared the young of today to be the leaders of tomorrow in the lessons we teach both in and outside the classroom, but more importantly in the values we encourage in every aspect of our daily lives. Moral integrity, ambition, responsibility, and kindness are the MARK of a Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation education.



# Chorister School

## Welcome to Chorister School

Chorister School is a distinctive and nurturing school, set within the remarkable surroundings of Durham Cathedral. In this inspiring setting, children are encouraged to grow in confidence, curiosity and character, expanding their social and academic awareness within a stimulating and supportive environment.

## Choristers to the Cathedral

As the Choir School to Durham Cathedral, Chorister School holds a unique and cherished place within the life of the Cathedral, the city and the wider Foundation. All Durham Cathedral choristers are pupils at the School, and pupils at both Chorister School and Durham School have the opportunity to join the renowned Durham Cathedral Choir between the ages of 7 and 13, benefiting from a first-class musical education.

The life of a chorister is demanding but extraordinarily fulfilling. Choristers sing alongside adult professional singers and are treated as professional musicians from the outset, working each day with singers, organists and conductors of international renown. The Durham Cathedral Choir includes 24 girl choristers and 24 boy choristers, who sing alongside the 12 ladies and gentlemen of the Choir. Much of the Choir's singing takes place within the awe-inspiring daily rhythm of worship in Durham Cathedral, alongside an exciting programme of concerts, broadcasts, tours and recordings.

## Cocurriculum

Music is, however, just one part of the rich and rounded education offered at Chorister School. The music provision on the Cathedral site is outstanding, and pupils enjoy access to a wide range of musical opportunities, including orchestra, instrumental and choral groups, as well as the many performances that take place throughout the year. Drama also plays a vibrant role in School life, with pupils participating enthusiastically in Nativities, musicals and shows that build confidence, creativity and collaboration.

Beyond the classroom, children benefit from a wide-ranging co-curricular programme that encourages them to discover new interests and embrace new challenges. An extensive Games programme includes weekly competitive fixtures across a range of sports, as well as swimming lessons in the Senior School pool. Pupils also enjoy a variety of clubs and activities, including karate, ballet, chess club and craft club.

In preparation for a smooth transition to the Senior School, pupils are gradually introduced to a range of specialist teachers, while continuing to enjoy the consistency and support of a Form Tutor. The result is an education that combines warmth and ambition, tradition and opportunity, in a school community where every child is known, valued and encouraged to flourish.



# Job Overview

Reporting to the Principal of the Foundation.

The Headteacher is responsible for providing strong and inspirational leadership for Chorister School, in line with the aims, ethos and values of the Chorister School and the wider Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation.

The individual will be responsible for ensuring Chorister School is the school of first choice for pre-prep and prep-school age children in the City of Durham and surrounding area, by delivering high standards in academic, pastoral and cocurricular provision. The Headteacher will manage improvement, innovation and change and will play a leading role in promoting and marketing the School.

The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this job description are indicative and may vary over time. The Headteacher will be expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the level, nature and extent of this senior post.

## Strategy and Vision

- Develop and articulate a clear and compelling vision for the future development and direction of the School that aligns with the Foundation's aims, values, traditions and ethos, working closely with the Governors and the Principal of the Foundation.
- Keep apprised of the strategic context and changes in the local and wider marketplace, adapting as necessary.
- Inform the Governors in a timely manner of the School's needs and challenges and proactively propose ways in which the School can meet those challenges.
- Keep the School Development Plan under regular review with the Principal of the Foundation and the Governors.
- Provide visible, strong and inspiring leadership to both staff and pupils in order to achieve the highest standards in all aspects of education provided both in and out of the classroom.
- Lead and manage change effectively.
- Maintain a strong culture of collaboration within the Foundation and between the Chorister School and Durham Cathedral.
- Cultivate a culture of collaboration, aspiration and continuous improvement within the School.

## Management and Finance

- Work closely with the Operations Manager to ensure that the School's budget targets are met, that funds are spent wisely and productively, and that the School's finances and facilities remain healthy.
- Work with the Operations Manager to identify and develop non-fee based income generating opportunities.
- Work with the Chorister School Leadership Team, developing, supporting and empowering them in their roles.

## Leadership

- Actively promote and build the School's reputation, based on a clear, compelling and competitive brand and offer.

## Management and Finance, continued...

- Recruit and retain dedicated teaching and support staff of outstanding quality who are sympathetic to the aims and values of the School and support and assist them in developing their professional skills and goals.
- Deploy staff appropriately and effectively across the School, maximising the available resources and staffing for the benefit of the pupils.
- Ensure the School is compliant with all relevant regulatory requirements, including ISI requirements, overseeing a routine programme for the monitoring and review of all School policies and procedures.
- Ensure, with the wider Prep School Leadership Team and the Foundation's Support Heads of Department, including Estates, Health & Safety, HR, IT the smooth and effective running of all day-to-day School operations.

## Relationships, Marketing and Communications

- Maintain an effective and productive partnership with the Cathedral through close collaboration with link members of the Dean and Chapter and the Master of the Choristers and Organist.
- Work closely with the Director of Marketing and Admissions to ensure the School has clear and effective marketing and admissions strategies, identifying and developing key relationships with local nurseries, schools and prospective parents.
- Ensure that the School's offer is sufficiently attractive to recruit pupils of high academic promise and talent in a highly competitive and rapidly evolving market.

- Communicate effectively both face-to-face and in writing with all sections of the School and the wider Foundation, especially Governors, staff, pupils, parents, alumni, other schools and the local community.
- Achieve strong and effective working relationships with the Principal who is responsible to the Governors for the overall direction of the whole Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation.



## Academic and Cocurriculum

- Ensure the School offers high quality teaching with engaging, inspirational and active lessons across all age ranges.
- Keep the School curriculum under review, recognising and evaluating current educational initiatives and research and innovating when it is in the interests of the pupils to do so.
- Ensure the School's selection, academic support and tracking processes are robust and well-managed and work closely with Durham School on pupil monitoring and transition.
- Develop and promote the cocurricular programme to ensure a wide range of stimulating and enriching activities, including sport, music, drama, art, outdoor activities/forest school and trips.



## Pastoral and Safeguarding

- Ensure a culture within the School which safeguards and promotes the welfare of staff and pupils.
- Ensure the School has high standards for the management of safeguarding, safer recruitment, health and safety and other risks, ensuring compliance with KCSiE, HSE and other legal and regulatory requirements.
- Provide strategic pastoral oversight and leadership for the School, working closely with the Deputy Head [Pastoral] and DSL of the Foundation as well as Chorister School pastoral staff, and keep up-to-date with safeguarding requirements and developments and with best practice in pastoral provision.
- Ensure the School is a happy and stimulating environment where pupils are supported and their wellbeing is developed through strong, appropriate relationships with staff and effective pastoral structures and policies.
- Lead the smooth transition of Chorister School pupils to Durham School, ensuring that all pupils feel welcome, included, valued and important members of the Foundation community.

## Health and Safety at Work

- All staff share responsibility for achieving safe working conditions. The postholder must take care of his/her own health and safety and that of others, observe applicable safety rules and follow instructions for the safe use of equipment. All staff are required to confirm that they have read and understood the Foundation's Health and Safety Policy.
- As a School leader, the Headteacher of Chorister School will have additional responsibilities for Health and Safety, including for risk assessments and fire safety.

## Training Requirements

All teaching staff, including the Headteacher, are required to undertake a range of mandatory training. Although the Headteacher is supported by a Designated Safeguarding Lead on the leadership team, they will be required to undertake Designated Child Protection Trainer/Lead Trainer, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safer Recruitment training.



# Person Specification

| Personal Qualities and Characteristics                                                                                                                                                                                        | Essential | Desirable |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Warm, enthusiastic, dynamic and with a positive approach.                                                                                                                                                                     | •         |           |
| A visible, approachable and accessible role model to others within the School and an effective and engaging ambassador for the School externally.                                                                             | •         |           |
| In sympathy and alignment with the Christian values of the Foundation, the Church of England's mission and the role and purpose of a major cathedral. .                                                                       | •         |           |
| An understanding of and empathy for the particular values, ethos and heritage of Chorister School and the wider Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation.                                                                          | •         |           |
| A commitment to delivering excellent education within a co-educational, day pre-prep and day and boarding preparatory school context.                                                                                         | •         |           |
| An understanding of, and commitment to, the value of the co-curricular life of the School and its role in pupils' overall learning experience.                                                                                | •         |           |
| Takes a pupil-centred approach and is able to build respectful and empathetic relationships with pupils.                                                                                                                      | •         |           |
| A commitment to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.                                                                                                                                                            | •         |           |
| A commitment to the protection and safeguarding of children and young people. Values and respects the views and needs of children and young people.                                                                           | •         |           |
| Value the historic links between the Foundation and the Cathedral, and support the Foundation's Christian ethos, Church of England mission, the Cathedral's worship and choral tradition, and their close daily relationship. | •         |           |
| A good degree and a teaching qualification/QTS.                                                                                                                                                                               | •         |           |
| An inspiring teacher with an interest in pedagogy and educational research and evidence of relevant continuing professional development.                                                                                      | •         |           |
| Knowledge and understanding of the 2 to 11 age range, including EYFS requirements and the nursery/Pre-Prep sector.                                                                                                            | •         |           |
| A School leadership or a management qualification.                                                                                                                                                                            |           | •         |
| Experience of leadership in a co-educational school with a nursery and/or Pre-Prep section.                                                                                                                                   |           | •         |
| Experience of managing or leading change.                                                                                                                                                                                     |           | •         |
| Knowledge of fundraising and alumni engagement.                                                                                                                                                                               |           | •         |

| Person Specification                                                                                                                                                                                               | Essential | Desirable |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| A proven track record of effective school leadership, preferably within a co-educational setting.                                                                                                                  | •         |           |
| A clear vision of the purpose of the education provided at Chorister School and the ability to communicate and promote that vision with clarity, consistency and conviction to all.                                | •         |           |
| An open, collaborative and consultative management style.                                                                                                                                                          | •         |           |
| Able to make and stand by decisions.                                                                                                                                                                               | •         |           |
| An experienced and effective manager with the ability to inspire confidence in their staff, building on diverse talents, skills and perspectives.                                                                  | •         |           |
| A willingness to delegate, a clear sense of when and what to delegate and a commitment to staff development.                                                                                                       | •         |           |
| An understanding of the key financial issues facing independent schools based on numeracy, financial and budgetary acumen and experience as well as commercial experience.                                         | •         |           |
| An understanding of risk and resourcing issues and context [both people and financial] and relevant legal and regulatory requirements.                                                                             | •         |           |
| A track record of delivering innovation and improvement.                                                                                                                                                           | •         |           |
| Other Skills and Knowledge                                                                                                                                                                                         | Essential | Desirable |
| Demonstrable skills in promoting the School to prospective parents and a proven track record of outward-facing marketing activities and relationship building.                                                     | •         |           |
| An outstanding and inspiring communicator and presenter with the ability to engage and persuade a variety of different audiences.                                                                                  | •         |           |
| Experience of building relationships of high trust and confidence with parents and of managing any issues or concerns promptly, fairly, sensitively and effectively.                                               | •         |           |
| Excellent organisational, time management and prioritisation skills with the ability to remain calm and to be agile and adaptable under pressure.                                                                  | •         |           |
| Willing and able to attend the full range of Foundation events and functions, including during evenings and weekends, based on the requirements of the calendar.                                                   | •         |           |
| Confident in the use of IT and digital skills with an understanding of the role of, opportunities for and potential issues with technology in education and in the lives of children and young people more widely. | •         |           |

## Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation Leadership and Governance

The Board of Governors of the Foundation meets at least three times a year and deals with the business of both schools.

There are ten sub-committees which discuss the progress of both schools:

1. Finance & General Purpose
2. Education
3. Chorister
4. Audit
5. Estates
6. Health & Safety
7. Development
8. Marketing, PR, & Communications
9. Staff Consultative Committee
10. Search

The Headteacher of Chorister School is a member of most of these committees. There is also a Board which oversees Durham School Trading Ltd, the Foundation's Commercial arm.

The Headteacher of Chorister School is accountable to the Governors of Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation for the effective leadership and management of all aspects of Chorister School. The postholder reports to the Principal of Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation and is part of the Foundation's Senior Leadership Team [SLT].

All members of the SLT play a key role in both the strategic development and the effective day-to-day running of the Foundation. SLT members are expected to model visibly the ethos and values of the Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation, including the high value placed on ensuring a single cohesive community based on moral integrity, ambition, responsibility, and kindness

A visible SLT presence is expected in the full life of the whole Foundation, including at evening and weekend events and at both Durham School and Chorister School.



## SLT Responsibilities

All members of the Senior Leadership Team are expected to complete the following duties:

- Take collective responsibility for all SLT decisions and their communication and implementation, as appropriate. Shape and deliver the Foundation's Development Plan, acting at all times in the interests of the Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation, including through the effective oversight or management of compliance, risk, staff and financial resources.
- Demonstrate the highest levels of commitment and compliance to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.
- Demonstrate a commitment to the Foundation's objectives relating to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Promote the Foundation's fundraising activities as requested.
- Promote the Health & Safety of everyone within the Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation. Participate in the holiday rota to cover any emergencies that may arise.
- Ensure a high level of visibility at School events.
- Undertake disciplinary investigations when necessary.

# Appointment Process

## The Application

Applicants should submit a completed application form with along with a covering letter which fully addresses the competencies outlined in the job description and person specification.

Completed applications should be sent to the Principal's PA, Mrs Emma Mussell, at [e.mussell@dcsf.org.uk](mailto:e.mussell@dcsf.org.uk).

## Closing Date

The closing date for applications is 08:30 BST on **Thursday 14 May 2026**

## Longlist

Longlisted applicants will be invited to participate in a preliminary online interviews in the week commencing **18th May 2026**.

The Foundation reserve the right to appoint at any time in the process and before published dates.

## Briefing Visit

An opportunity for a briefing visit to meet with colleagues, key stakeholders, and visit the School will be provided in the week commencing **1st June 2026**.

## Shortlist

If you are shortlisted, you will be invited to attend an interview/selection day in person at Chorister School during the week commencing **8th June 2026**

This will involve a number of interviews and tasks and will also explore your suitability to work with children and lead the Foundation's prep school. If you require any reasonable adjustments to assist you in the selection process, please advise us of these so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Your visit will involve a meeting with our Human Resources Department in order to undertake a number of checks we are required to carry out by the Department for Education [DfE]. These checks include the requirement for a satisfactory criminal records check at enhanced level through the Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS] and checks to verify your identity, address, right to work in the UK, qualifications and overseas checks [if relevant]. A list of valid identity documents will be sent to you in advance of your interview. In the event that you are unsuccessful, please be assured that photocopies of documents taken will be destroyed. During your visit with our Human Resources Department, if you have not done so already, you will be required to sign your application form in order to declare that the information you have given is accurate and true.

## Equal Opportunities

Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications regardless of age, gender, race, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.



## GET IN TOUCH:

+44 (0)191 731 9270  
principal@dcsf.org.uk

dcsf.org.uk

Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation  
Quarryheads Lane  
DH1 4SZ

Registered Charity No. 1023407



Durham  
Cathedral  
Schools  
Foundation



*Please note all information submitted as part of an application for a position at Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation will be held and processed under the terms of our privacy notice available at [www.dcsf.org.uk/pn/](http://www.dcsf.org.uk/pn/)*