



Clerk to Council

January 2022

Welcome from the Headmistress

Wycombe Abbey is an exceptional place; it operates as a modern full boarding school for around 660 girls and we are committed to the development of each one. This year we celebrate 125 years of educating young women and our vision remains to provide our pupils with a world class education. We are excited about encouraging curiosity, bold ideas, innovation, leadership and delight in learning - inside and outside the classroom.

Superb academic outcomes are the hallmark of a Wycombe Abbey education and girls regularly secure places at the most prestigious universities globally. However, we understand the importance of looking beyond the narrow confines of excellent examination results to define success. Our rich co-curricular programme includes an array of activities and opportunities, ensuring that every girl develops her passions and explores new possibilities. These experiences, in turn, help to build the skills, discipline and character that will support her future life.

Last year's UVI girls were awarded 63.3% at A* and 93.9% A*-A grades at A Level. Most importantly, the vast majority of the UVI secured places at their first choice universities including the London School of Economics and Political Science, Durham University, University of St Andrews and the University of Bristol, to study a broad range of courses. Sixteen girls took up places at Oxford and Cambridge, and a number of girls secured their chosen places at US universities including Columbia, Stanford, Georgetown, University of Chicago and University of California, Berkeley. At GCSE, 95.2% were awarded A* grades and 99.6% A*-A grades. The vast majority of last year's UV have continued into our Sixth Form.

Ultimately, schools are about people and at the heart of Wycombe Abbey's success is our total commitment to pastoral care through boarding. The core values of mutual respect, encouragement and trust underpin everything we do; in this happy and close-knit community everyone is known as an individual, friendships flourish and girls enjoy each other's company, all within the wonderful surroundings of 170 acres of magnificent parkland.

We offer superb modern facilities, including a sports centre with a heated indoor 25-metre pool, a performing arts centre with its own theatre and recital hall, a wide range of teaching facilities and our Courtyard Cafe. We are constantly improving and evolving our estate and through the development of our site masterplan, we will see the creation of a truly world class campus. You can read more about Wycombe Abbey's Strategic Direction [here](#).

Wycombe Abbey's outstanding reputation for excellence is built on the dedication and skills of our staff. Every member of staff at Wycombe Abbey contributes towards the School's thriving community and works to continually strengthen our ambition for excellence. We seek to recruit well-qualified and enthusiastic staff who demonstrate knowledge of, and passion for their area of expertise and contribute to the wider life of the School. In return, the School provides staff with a wide variety of opportunities to develop professionally within a supportive team and wonderful working environment.

Thank you for your interest in joining Wycombe Abbey; if you would like to discover more about the School, please refer to our website [here](#). We hope that you will find the information in this pack useful and we look forward to hearing from you if you feel that this post may suit your skills and experience.



Mrs Jo Duncan
Headmistress



Executive Summary

Wycombe Abbey is a world-class school operating at the cutting edge of educational excellence. With its distinctive heritage, magnificent 170-acre campus and impressive resources, the School provides an outstanding education for girls aged 11-18.

To help achieve this, the School is governed by a Council of 15 Governors who are both Trustees of the Charity and Directors of the Company. Council provides non-executive oversight of the School and is responsible for setting strategic direction and the long-term stewardship of the School. Details of the current Council Members can be found [here](#). The full Council meets at least once a term. There are a number of committees including: Education; Finance and General Purposes; Safeguarding, Pastoral and Boarding; Risk; Nominations; and Human Resources and Remuneration as well as some sub-committees, such as Investments. The committees also meet termly and, from time to time, working parties may be formed to focus on particular projects. The School also has 4 subsidiary companies and 2 charitable trusts and members of Council serve as directors or trustees of these entities as appropriate.

Wycombe Abbey now seeks to appoint a dedicated Clerk to Council to provide independent advice, guidance and support to ensure that Council is able to fulfil its responsibilities whilst operating properly and efficiently within the relevant legal and regulatory frameworks. The Clerk to Council will be the Governors' first point of contact for all matters relating to the governance of the School and will facilitate the smooth administration of Council business in line with the School's governing articles.

The Clerk to Council will perform a vital role and is likely to have operated at Board or Senior Leadership Team level in the past. They are expected to be a valued and trusted advisor to the Chair and Members of Council whenever called upon, inspiring confidence with their professionalism, organisational skills and knowledge of the principles of good governance. The successful candidate will have a strong intellect and excellent communications skills. A knowledge of Charity Law would be an advantage but is not essential.

The Clerk to Council reports to and is responsible to the Chair of Council and the two will communicate regularly. On a day-to-day basis the Clerk will report to the Bursar and is expected to work in close collaboration with him, and with the Headmistress, to guarantee mutually respectful, productive and efficient interaction between the School's Executive and Council.



The Role of Clerk to Council

Aim: The main purpose of Clerk to Council is to provide independent advice, guidance, and support to members of Council on a range of matters relating to governance and procedure. This is a complex administrative, advisory and information management role ensuring that Council business is managed within the appropriate legal and regulatory framework and in accordance with best practice.

Reports to: Chair of Council

Hours: An average of 15 hours per week during term time. This role requires the post holder to be flexible and accessible, since, inevitably, at certain points during the School terms, the workload is intense, while other periods are quieter. The Post Holder will need to be able to work at times convenient to Council, including some Saturdays and evenings. He or she must be able to attend all meetings of Council, its committees and subsidiaries. Meetings are usually held at the School or occasionally in London, but the post holder will be able to work from home or the School at other times.

Holidays: 25 days + Bank Holidays (Pro rata)

Key Responsibilities:

General Governance:

- Advising Council on the regulatory framework (i.e., relevant acts, regulations, and protocols).
- Ensuring that the Governing Instrument meets the needs of the School and advising Council of appropriate or necessary amendments.
- Ensuring that appropriate Terms of Reference exist for Committees and Working Groups and are reviewed as appropriate.
- Overseeing occasional audits of governance (either internal or external), as instructed by the Chair.
- Ensure utmost confidentiality is maintained in relation to all Council matters.

Provide consistent and accurate legal, professional and governance advice to Council, its committees and subsidiaries:

- Proactively advise Council on governance and relevant legislation and procedural matters and where new legislative or procedural changes are being considered at the earliest stage of their introduction.
- Act as the first point of contact for Governors with queries on statutory, procedural and Council matters.
- Ensure that all Governors are aware of their statutory responsibilities, especially their responsibility for the safeguarding of all pupils at the School and ensure that statutory policies are in place and are revised when necessary.
- Access appropriate legal and professional advice, support, and guidance, and where necessary seek advice and guidance from third parties on behalf of Council.
- Research, share and offer advice on best practice in governance, including on committee structures and self-evaluation.

The Role of Clerk to Council contd...

Administration of Council and Committee business

- Establishment of regular meetings for Council and its Committees including dates, venues, IT support, carried forward agenda items, quoracy, minutes and actions.
- Regularly meeting with the Chair of each meeting to prepare a focused agenda and follow up on actions agreed.
- Coordinate production of papers and preparation of briefing packs ensuring these are distributed in line with agreed timeframes.
- Draft minutes of all meetings ensuring respective Chairs agree for inclusion as draft minutes in next set of papers.
- Organising and making appropriate arrangements for the establishment of any panels of Council that may from time to time be required to hear appeals or to deal with complaints or grievances (including the identification of independent members to join these panels where appropriate).
- Maintaining & updating the Council area of the School website and SharePoint site.
- Arrange Council Awaydays, formal dining and other events in conjunction with the Bursar's and Headmistress's offices.

Recruitment and Induction of all new governors (in conjunction with the School's Human Resources function), including

- Support the Nominations Committee in the recruitment and retirement coordination of Council members.
- Maintain a succession planning matrix and identify skills gaps.
- Conduct appropriate vetting checks, including formal identity checks, right to work in UK checks, DBS disclosure check or equivalent, and Prohibition from Management of Independent Schools check.
- Ensure the completion of deeds to covenant, declarations or responsibilities/interests, or similar documents.
- Registration of new governors with Companies House (as Directors) and the Charity Commission (as Trustees).
- Induction and training of new governors to meet all regulatory requirements and the needs of Council.

Training Governors

- Organising appropriate training for Council (collectively) and all governors (individually) and recording such training.
- Dissemination of governance best practice and liaising with organisations such as AGBIS (Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools).

Subsidiary Companies and Other Related Entities

- Where required, extend the principles and responsibilities of the role to the Subsidiary Companies of the School.
- Where appointed, fulfil the duties of Company Secretary to the relevant Subsidiary Companies.
- Where required, extend the principles and responsibilities of the role to the Wycombe Abbey Foundation.

General

- Take part in such staff training as may be agreed.
- Be contactable at all times during the working day and, when on duty, by telephone.
- Promote the safeguarding and welfare of the pupils and young people as set out in the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.
- Undertake such other tasks relevant to the work or needs of the School as these needs arise and as may be reasonably requested.

Person Specification

Specialist knowledge and experience

- A strong educational background, ideally to at least degree level.
- Previous experience working as a Clerk to a Board of Trustees or as a Company Secretary in a commercial environment is desirable.
- Charity knowledge, gained within a school or other non-profit making organisation is desirable.
- An interest in and knowledge of company law and/or governance.
- Working knowledge of Data Protection legislation.
- Excellent administrative, numeric and IT skills (Microsoft office essential).

Relationships and advice

- Ability to develop immediate, lasting, and trustworthy relationships.
- Must have the confidence and verbal reasoning skills to influence colleagues at highest level.
- Absolute integrity with the ability to maintain confidentiality and remain impartial.
- Dedicated team-player, who strives for excellence and leads by example.

Communication

- Excellent communication skills, both verbally and in writing, adapting style to suit the audience.
- Communicates with gravitas, positivity and diplomacy.
- Ability to listen, record and produce accurate minutes of meetings.
- Pro-active in advising colleagues of key information and the status of tasks.

Attention to detail

- Ability to read, understand and process, large volumes of information.
- High level of accuracy and attentional to detail.
- Well-developed problem-solving skills.

Organisation

- Highly self-motivated; able to use initiative and to work alone without direction.
- Strong organisational and time management skills, with a proven track record for meeting targets and deadlines.
- Ability to combine high level tasks with more mundane ones.
- Able to perform well and remain professional whilst under pressure.

Flexibility

- Adaptable and flexible with working patterns as required, including ability to attend evening or weekend meetings.
- Able to successfully adapt to changing demands and conditions.
- Practical and pragmatic, with an 'can do' attitude.
- Enthusiastic, with an eagerness to learn new skills and a commitment to personal continuous professional development.

Person Specification contd...

Special conditions

The post is conditional to an enhanced DBS check.

Child Protection Statement:

The post holder's responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and young persons for whom s/he is responsible, or with whom s/he comes into contact will be to adhere to and ensure compliance with the School's Child Protection Policy Statement at all times. If, in the course of carrying out the duties of the post, the post holder becomes aware of any actual or potential risks to the safety or welfare of children in the school, s/he must report any concerns to the School's Designated Lead for Safeguarding or to the Headmistress.

The School values of Trust, Encouragement, Mutual Respect, Dynamism, Excellence, Innovation, Service and Balance should be followed to enhance working relationships and to benefit the whole School community.

The duties and responsibilities contained within this job description may change from time to time according to the requirements of the role. This document is not intended to have a contractual effect.



Belonging to the Wycombe Abbey Community

Wycombe Abbey is a welcoming and vibrant community for all staff.

Our school is set in 170 acres of parkland. It is a beautiful countryside setting, within a five-minute walk of the town of High Wycombe. There is easy access to London, the Chiltern Hills and attractive towns such as Marlow, Beaconsfield and Henley-on-Thames nearby. There are many National Trust properties within five miles such as Hughenden Manor, Disraeli's home for many years, West Wycombe Park and Cliveden.

There are outstanding Grammar Schools in High Wycombe itself and also in surrounding towns. London is within easy reach, with the fast train from High Wycombe to London Marylebone taking just 24 minutes. Oxford and Bicester Village are within 30 miles, with a new direct train link. Wembley Stadium and Heathrow are just 20 miles away and there are good transport links to the other London airports.

There is a range of committees that staff can join including Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainability and others. The Wycombe Abbey Community Association works in partnership with the Wellbeing Committee to organise staff wellbeing and social events on a regular basis, which are well-attended.

Wycombe Abbey will celebrate its significant 125th anniversary next year and an exciting programme of celebratory events will be taking place to mark this momentous milestone.

Terms of Appointment

A formal contract of employment will be drawn up on appointment.

The following notes provide guidance, without prejudice, on the main provisions of the agreement.

Contract

This is a part-time, permanent contract. The first six months will be a probationary period.

Appointment Date

As soon as possible.

Hours of Work

An average of 15 hours per week, as agreed with the Chair of Council and Bursar. Flexibility around working hours is required, and some homeworking possible.

Salary

Commensurate with skills and experience.

Pension Scheme

All eligible staff will be enrolled automatically within the School's pension scheme.

Death in Service Cover

Members of the pension scheme are provided with life cover at 3x annual salary.

Training and Development

There is an extensive induction programme for new colleagues and ongoing professional development and training of all staff.

Provision of Meals

Meals and refreshments are provided free of charge during the working day.

Sports Centre

The facilities in the Davies Sports Centre (swimming pool, squash courts, fitness suite, etc.) are available for staff use.

Fee Remission

Fee remission is available for daughters attending the School, subject to the usual entry requirements and space being available.

Parking

Free parking is provided.

Equal Opportunities

It is the policy of Wycombe Abbey to ensure equality of opportunity for all members of staff, both teaching and support staff.

Safeguarding

All staff share responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the pupils and must adhere to, and comply with, the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy at all times.

Pre-Employment Checks

The appointment is subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring check.

Applications

The closing date for applications is 6 February 2022.

Please submit a completed application form, which you will find on our website, as soon as possible, together with a covering letter addressed to the Bursar, Mr Mark Mackenzie Crooks, outlining the experience and personal qualities that you believe qualify you for this position.

The application form and letter should be emailed to Miss K Scorer, Interim HR Manager:
scorerk@wycombeabbey.com



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ABBEY

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