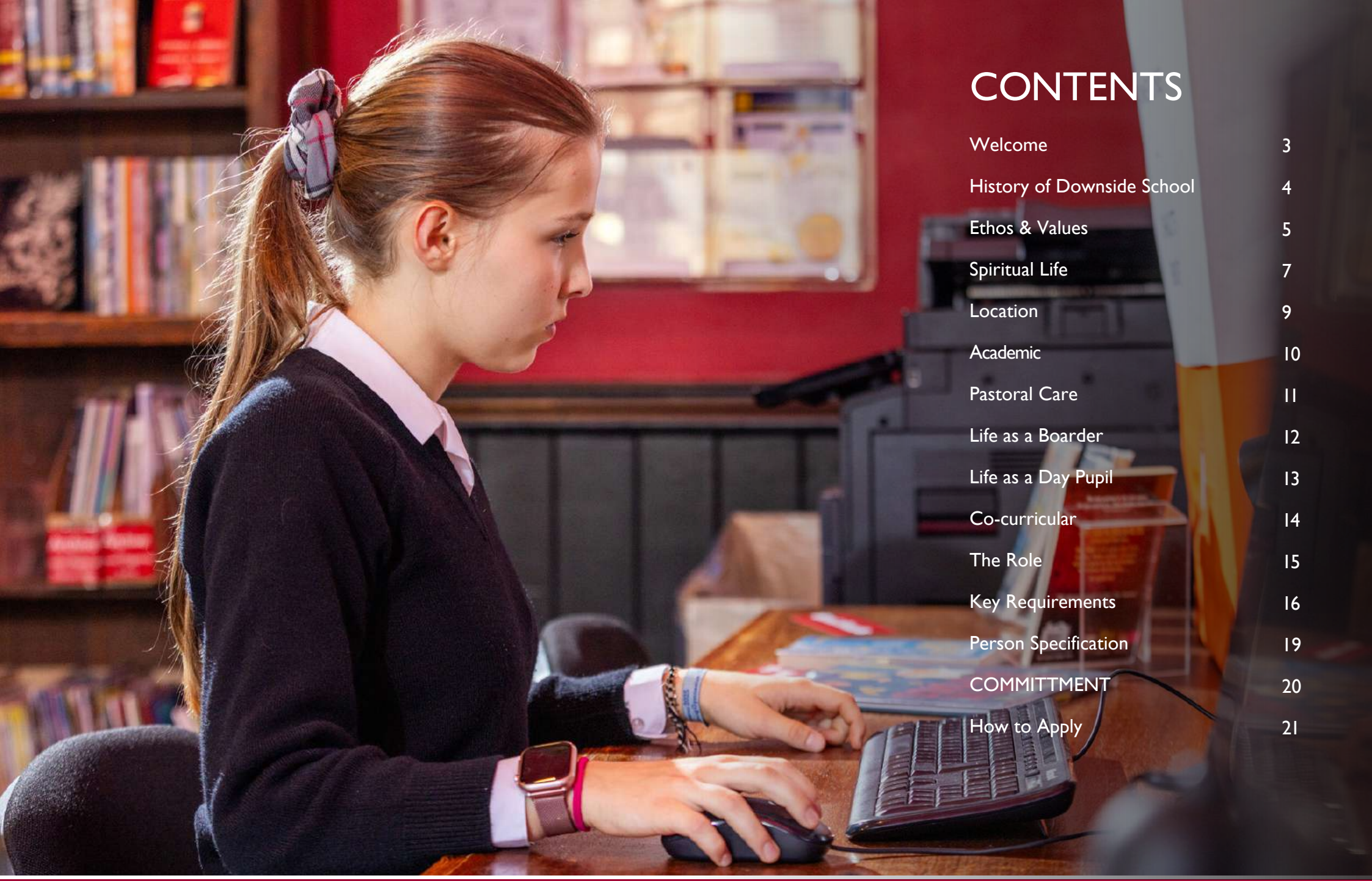
DOWNSIDE SCHOOL



SENIOR DEPUTY HEAD (ACADEMIC) - CANDIDATE INFORMATION



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WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in joining Downside School and for considering becoming part of our community.

Choosing where to work is an important decision. It is about more than finding a role that matches your skills and experience. It is also about finding somewhere you feel a sense of belonging, where your contribution is valued and where you share a common sense of purpose. I hope this information pack gives you an insight into what makes Downside such a distinctive place to work.

Downside is a Catholic school rooted in the Benedictine tradition, where education is about far more than academic achievement. We believe in the formation of the whole person, helping every young person to discover their gifts, develop their character and grow into the person they are called to be. This is a shared endeavour, and every member of staff has an important part to play.

Our Benedictine values of hospitality, humility, reverence and service shape the way we live and work together. We seek to create a community in which everyone is known, valued and encouraged to flourish. Whether working in the classroom, supporting our boarding community or contributing to the many aspects of school life behind the scenes, our staff share in something greater than their individual roles.

What makes Downside special is not simply what we do, but how we do it. The relationships we build, the care we show for one another and the commitment we bring to our work are at the heart of our community. We are ambitious for our pupils and equally committed to creating an environment in which our staff can grow, contribute and find fulfilment in their work.

I hope that, as you explore this opportunity, you will recognise something of the spirit of Downside and consider the contribution you might make to its future.
I look forward to receiving your application.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Randall
Head



HISTORY OF DOWNSIDE SCHOOL

In 1606, the Benedictine community of St Gregory the Great was founded at Douai, France, by a group of English and Welsh monks in exile. Eight years later, they opened Downside. By the beginning of the 18th century, it was held in such high esteem in England that Queen Anne ordered the Duke of Marlborough to spare it when he stormed Douai in 1710. In the 1790s, however, French revolutionaries plundered the Priory and School, but the monks and boys were allowed to escape to England in February 1795.

The School site moved to its current site at Stratton-on-the-Fosse in April 1814. A cedar tree was planted at the entrance to the grounds and still stands there today. Initially, the whole School was accommodated in what is now known as the Old House. The first stage of development was the Old Chapel, opened in 1823. In 1878, the building of the Basilica of St Gregory began. One of England's finest Gothic churches, it still serves as the School's main place of worship for Sunday Mass, weekly hymn practice and other services and community events.

During the First World War, over 500 Downside boys served in the Armed Forces and 109 of them lost their lives. Their average age was 25, and more than a fifth gained some honour or distinction. All their names are inscribed on the School's War Memorial, which was unveiled in 1922. 106 Downside boys were killed during the Second World War and are also commemorated on the War Memorial, and their photographs line the walls outside the Science Laboratories. We are very proud of our long-standing links with the Military.

In recent decades, Downside has seen many exciting and positive changes. The School became co-educational in 2005 and now has a split of 45% girls and 55% boys. The first lay Head was appointed in 2014, and the School became a Trust in its own right in 2020, separating legally and financially from Downside Abbey.



ETHOS & VALUES

OUR VISION

Downside's vision, as a Catholic and Benedictine school with Christ at its centre, is to be a bright light in education and to inspire service in our world.

OUR AIMS

- Guide pupils and staff to encounter Christ through experience of Benedictine community of faith
- Be uncompromising in the pursuit of academic excellence
- Foster a culture of unselfish love, integrity, humility and leadership through service
- Develop the character and confidence of young people through sport and co-curricular opportunities
- Develop the School's community facilities and resources through strategic stewardship

OUR VALUES

Downside, as a leading Catholic school maintains an ethos that is just as strong today as it was when the School was founded.

By working with families in a partnership built on trust, we provide the young people in our School with the strongest possible foundation for their education. Through belonging to a community in which each individual feels valued and included, pupils grow in confidence and are encouraged to develop their unique gifts, motivated by the joy of learning.

We are highly ambitious for our pupils and encourage them to seek out and welcome challenges. They consistently achieve beyond their expectations, and failure is not seen as something to fear. In fact, in a community where failure does not bring judgement and blame, it provides a valuable opportunity for humble reflection and can even be the crucial springboard for growth and development which leads ultimately to success.



ETHOS & VALUES

This is no hollow promise, but the genuine experience of our pupils as they are supported by teachers and staff who inspire and motivate them and are alive to their needs as individuals, whether in pursuing academic studies, or as they develop their sporting, musical and artistic talents, or grow as leaders through serving others.

The School's distinctive culture is built on its Catholic and Benedictine roots and supports the exploration of faith and spiritual growth within an inclusive and welcoming community. We embrace diversity and encourage imagination, creativity and open-mindedness. We believe that each individual is uniquely gifted and that every person has their own essential part to play. Our community is diminished if any one of us does not play our unique and distinct part or give of ourselves fully — like an orchestra, with each member playing their instrument, whilst listening and being in tune with others around them.



SPIRITUAL LIFE

Downside is a Catholic and Benedictine School. We welcome pupils of all faiths and none to reflect on their spirituality and to develop their life of faith. The Chaplaincy is at the centre of the School's life, working closely with the Head, the House Masters and Mistresses for the good of all — pupils and staff. In its work, the Chaplaincy keeps very much in mind the School's vision.

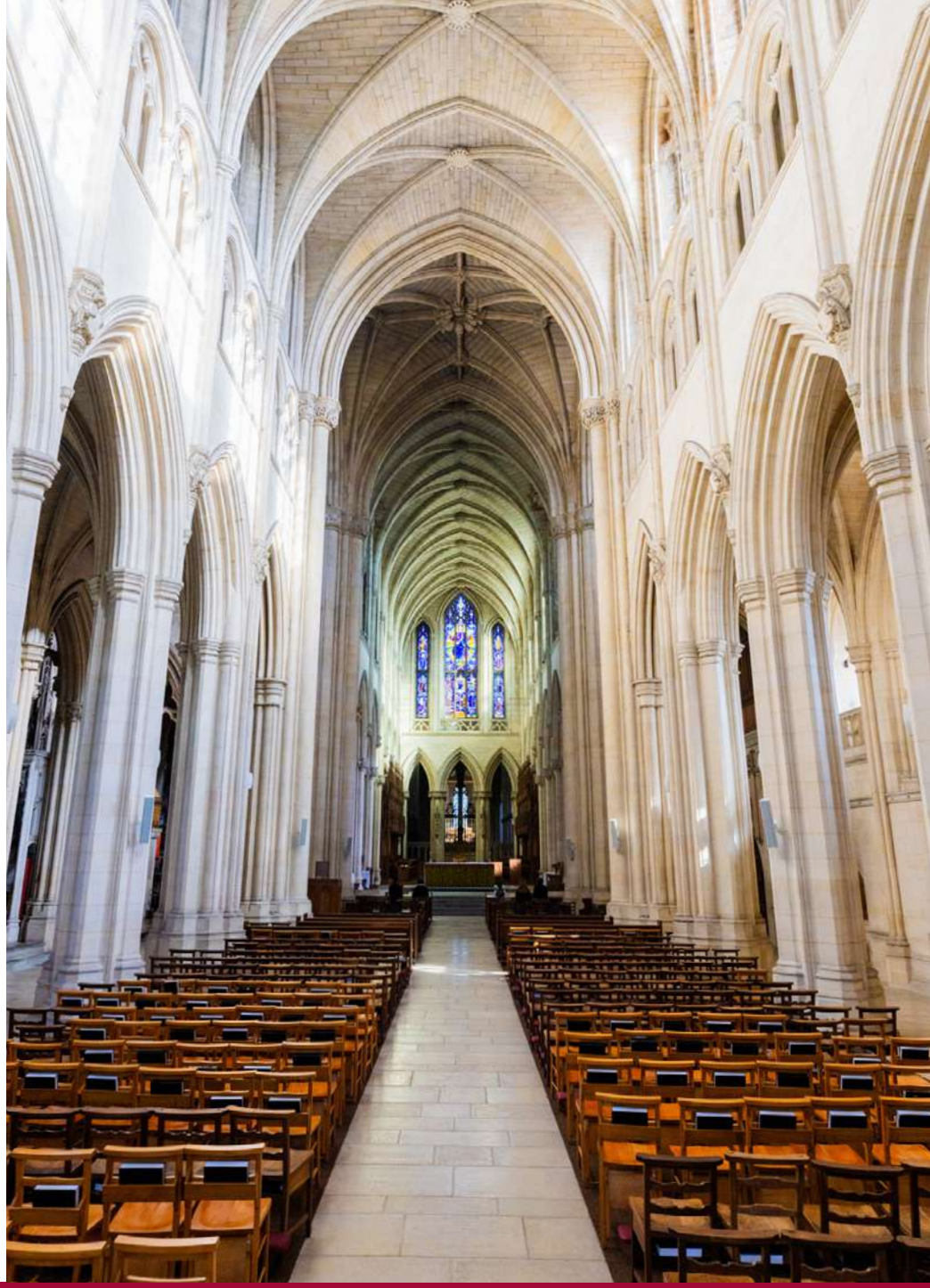
The School aims to guide pupils and staff to encounter Christ by experiencing a Benedictine culture underlined by the Benedictine values:

Welcome and hospitality are key elements in a school where pupils and staff work together to form a kind, mutually supportive community, based on the core principle of Christian love. Careful, active **listening** is an essential part of positive human relationships, and this is emphasised at Downside, as young people are guided in how to live together within their houses and within the school community as a whole.

Reverence, as an intrinsic part of regular school worship, and as part of respect for each person's individual human dignity, is a hallmark of life at Downside as a Benedictine school; it is part of the worship and love of God in Christ. This divine and human love draws the School into a communion whose members grow together in the love of truth and of one another. **Humility** enables people to live truly, communicating honestly with each other and God, enabling this love to develop.

Teaching and learning are central because of the need for our pupils to be skilled and educated people in a competitive world but also because our higher purpose is to grow in the knowledge of truth, which leads to God.

Personal discipline is something essential for the well-being of the individual and the community. It means that we are not enslaved to the world's distractions but free to pursue higher ambitions, such as service and the pursuit of knowledge.



SPIRITUAL LIFE

Downside emphasises the importance of living within a nurturing spiritual community; **concern for the individual** enables groups of individuals to live and grow together in a manner that fosters human flourishing.

Harmonious community life is the consequence of **building communion**; while there will always be some difficulties within communities, a spiritual purpose means that communion between people and with God is made possible.

There are many gifts in human life, if people are prepared to receive them. Through the Holy Spirit, the world is made full of beauty and wisdom; the **stewardship of gifts**, from the natural environment to human abilities, means that the whole world can benefit.



LOCATION

Downside School is situated in glorious English countryside in rural Somerset. Downside is just 25 minutes' drive from Bath, Bristol Airport is 40 minutes' drive, and London Heathrow is 2.5 hours away. The campus encompasses a performing arts centre, extensive playing fields and sports facilities, boarding Houses and teaching spaces, obviating the need for any transport between facilities.

ACADEMIC

Downside School is academically ambitious. Deeply embedded in our philosophy of learning, as well as in the Benedictine tradition, is the idea of transformation.

The purpose of education is to transform us into our best possible selves. As a non-selective school, we recognise that what matters most is the magnitude of that transformation, rather than headline data in league tables. When formation is right, outcomes follow. We are rightly proud of the fact that our pupils regularly exceed the grades at GCSE and A level indicated by baseline testing.

Academic achievements are reached through a process of self-fulfilment, wherein the individual is strengthened and balanced, rather than limited by the pressure of objective attainment for its own sake. By ensuring that their talents are identified and nurtured, Downside pupils truly do find themselves on the path to a 'life fully-lived', enjoying rewards, both academically and holistically, that defy the norm.



PASTORAL CARE

Downside is proud of the outstanding level of pastoral care it provides for pupil's health and well-being. Our School is well-known for its strong sense of community and for the supportive relationships between year groups and staff. The Houses sit at the heart of this and provide the best possible support for both boarding and day pupils, allowing them to develop true Christian values.

Pastoral care at Downside provides support for, and commitment to, the social, emotional, physical and moral well-being of all members of our community.

We also offer extensive healthcare provision and our outstanding catering is supplied by our award-wining catering team.



LIFE AS A BOARDER

School life revolves around the five Houses. These communities are at the heart of the School and are where lasting friendships are made and memories forged.

The Houses are managed by House Masters and House Mistresses and their assistants. House staff are available for support throughout the day, and all pupils have a tutor who meets them daily. Day pupils are fully integrated into Houses, and may choose to stay over for two or three nights a week. Junior boys and girls initially all join Smythe or Isabella House respectively so they can bond together. As Seniors, some move to other Houses (Barlow and Roberts for boys; Caverel for girls), whilst others remain in Smythe or Isabella. We believe this approach provides a good balance between the models of "horizontal" and "vertical" boarding.



LIFE AS A DAY PUPIL

Day pupils are fully integrated and live side by side as members of one of our boarding Houses. This ensures they have equal opportunity to share space to socialise and develop friendships, have access to changing facilities, and a place to call home during the day.

There is a full programme of evening and weekend activities on offer. Day pupils are always welcome to join any or all of the events, and many stay on in the evenings to take part activities such as music concerts, plays, clubs and House socials. We offer wraparound care from 8am-9pm.

Our School day fits the working day with everything on one beautiful rural campus, giving families significant flexibility at no extra cost and the improved quality of home life.

There is an extensive daily minibus service running from Bath, Frome, Castle Cary, the Chew Calley and villages in between.





CO-CURRICULAR

Co-curricular activities, clubs and societies at Downside provide vital experiences and opportunities, introducing pupils to life a variety of life skills and friends in other Houses and year groups. All pupils participate in the co-curricular programme, which runs throughout the week and at weekends, and there is also a particular focus on service activities on Wednesday afternoon. There are over 70 options to choose from, ranging from adventure and sport to creative arts.

WEEKENDS

Weekends are busy and purposeful at Downside. Pupils are engaged in a wide variety of activity options: clubs, games, sporting fixtures, socials, trips out, performing arts events and Sunday Mass.

TRIPS

Pupils benefit from a variety of trips throughout the year, including academic trips to Cornwall, London, Bristol or Rome; outdoor learning; Downside Adventure holidays, which include skiing in the Italian Alps, visits to Morocco, participation in the Ten Tors challenge, visits to Skern Lodge in Devon and Cheddar Reservoir, and retreats to a variety of locations including Buckfast Abbey and the Ammerdown Centre.

SPORT & GAMES

Our aim is to ensure that every pupil finds a sport or physical activity they can enjoy, excel at, and learn the values of being part of a team.

The main sports for boys are rugby, hockey, cricket, tennis and athletics. The main sports for girls are hockey, netball, tennis and athletics. An element of personalisation concerning sport options increases as pupils progress through the School, and many pupils are participate in badminton, basketball, cross-country, football, golf, rugby 7s, swimming, table-tennis and volleyball, with fixtures throughout the year, as well as plenty of clubs and activities in the evenings and weekends.









THE ROLE

The **Senior Deputy Head (Academic)** is the Head's principal deputy and a central partner in the strategic and operational leadership of Downside School. The postholder leads the academic life of the School, ensuring that ambitious teaching, a broad and appropriate curriculum, and effective support enable every pupil to make excellent progress. They translate the School's Catholic and Benedictine mission into lived educational practice, balancing intellectual ambition with the formation of the whole person.

The postholder has delegated responsibility for the effective day to day running of the educational operations, works closely with pastoral, boarding, co-curricular and support leaders, and deputises fully for the Head when required. The precise delegation of safeguarding, staffing and operational authority will be agreed with the Head and recorded in the School's leadership and compliance arrangements.

The postholder will have line management responsibility for The Academic Leadership Team, Heads of Faculty and Department, Learning Support, EAL, Examinations Officer and other academic functions as agreed

We seek a committed and practising Catholic who can actively promote and embody the School's Catholic and Benedictine ethos and provide spiritual leadership within our community.



KEY REQUIREMENTS

PRINCIPAL DEPUTY AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Act as the Head's principal deputy, exercising delegated authority and taking appropriate decisions in the Head's absence, including representing the School at meetings, assemblies, parent events and external engagements.
- Work with the Head in upholding and actively promoting the Catholic identity and Benedictine values of the School, ensuring they permeate all aspects of school life.
- Lead the coordination of the School's day to day educational operation, ensuring that routines, calendars, staffing arrangements and communications are coherent and effective.
- Contribute to Governors' reports, committee meetings, strategic risk review and decisions affecting educational quality, resources and long term sustainability.
- Promote an open, accountable and collegiate leadership culture rooted in Benedictine values, active listening, service and the dignity of each person.

ACADEMIC STRATEGY, STANDARDS AND PUPIL PROGRESS

- Set and communicate a compelling academic vision which combines high expectations with an inclusive, non-selective approach to education.
- Take responsibility for academic outcomes, including GCSE and A Level performance, value added, destinations and the progress of individual pupils and identifiable cohorts.
- Establish robust systems for academic tracking, analysis, intervention and evaluation, ensuring that data informs decisions without narrowing the educational experience.
- Ensure effective partnership between academic and pastoral teams, House staff and families in supporting pupils who are underachieving, excelling or experiencing barriers to learning.
- Report regularly to the Head and Governors on academic performance, risks, improvement priorities and the impact of interventions.

CURRICULUM AND TIMETABLE

- Lead the development and scheduling of the School timetable ensuring the effective deployment of teaching staff, facilities and academic resources.
- Lead curriculum design, review and implementation across all year groups, maintaining appropriate breadth, progression, challenge and choice.
- Oversee academic option processes, subject viability, setting arrangements and timetable planning, balancing educational ambition with staffing and financial constraints.
- Ensure that curriculum provision reflects the School's Catholic identity and meets applicable Independent School Standards and relevant inspection expectations.
- Champion intellectual curiosity, reading, scholarship, enrichment, independent learning and preparation for further education and life beyond school.
- Oversee the educational use of digital technology and artificial intelligence, including proportionate policies for integrity, assessment and classroom practice.



KEY REQUIREMENTS

TEACHING, LEARNING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

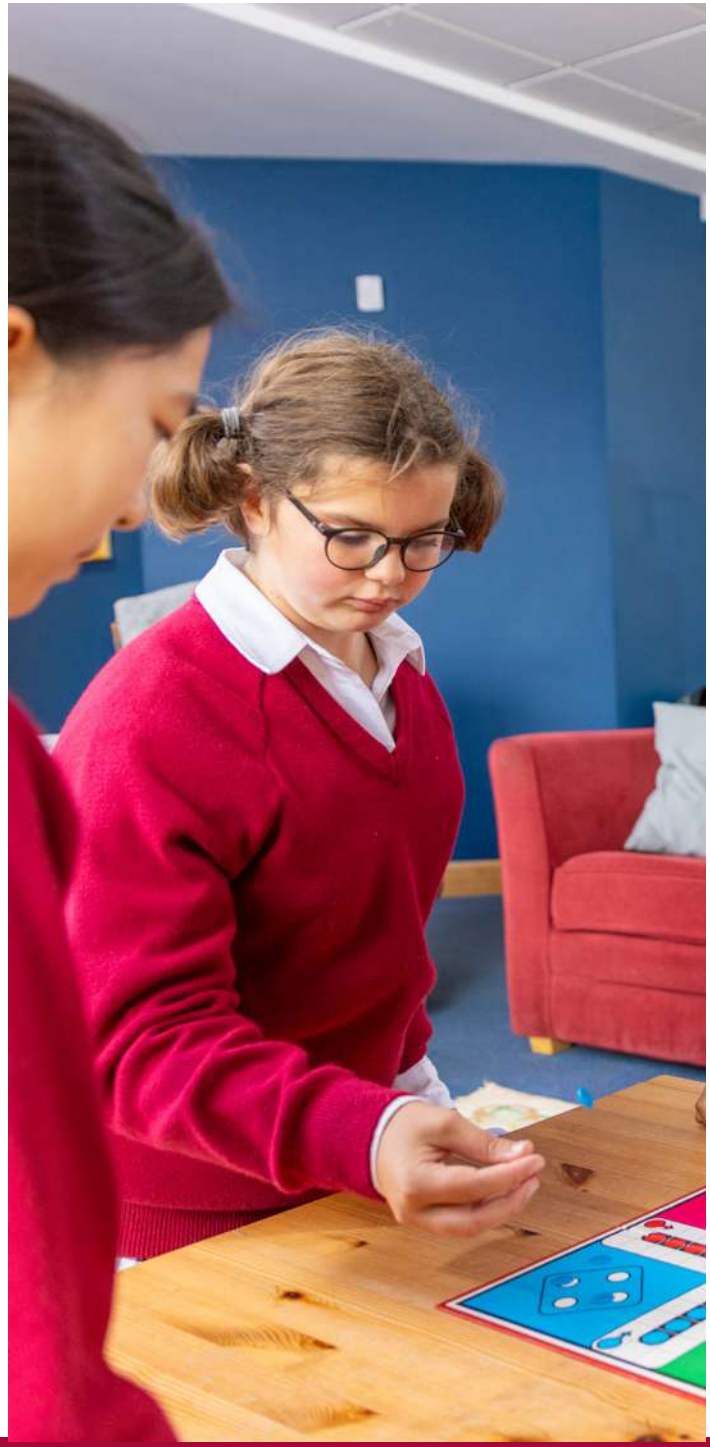
- Lead a coherent, proportionate programme of academic quality assurance through lesson visits, work scrutiny, pupil voice, assessment review and professional dialogue.
- Set clear expectations for teaching, feedback, marking, homework and assessment while respecting subject differences and professional judgement.
- Lead evidence-informed professional learning, induction, coaching and academic INSET, ensuring that development priorities respond to pupil needs and observed practice.
- Promote effective adaptive teaching, high expectations for pupils with additional learning needs, and appropriate challenge for the most able.
- Ensure that academic policies are understood, implemented consistently and evaluated for impact.

ASSESSMENT, EXAMINATIONS AND REPORTING

- Oversee internal assessments, academic reports, parents' meetings and communication about pupil progress.
- Line manage the Examinations Officer and ensure appropriate oversight of public examination arrangements, access arrangements, integrity and compliance with relevant awarding body and JCQ requirements.
- Maintain effective academic records, tracking and reporting processes, with appropriate data protection and information governance.
- Ensure that examinations, assessments and reporting support both accountability and improvement.

PEOPLE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- Line manage designated academic leaders and services, agreeing clear objectives, supporting performance and addressing concerns promptly and fairly.
- Develop the leadership capacity of Heads of Faculty and Department and promote purposeful collaboration between subject teams.
- Contribute to recruitment, deployment, appraisal, professional development and succession planning of teaching staff in partnership with the Head and relevant colleagues.
- Support efficient use of academic budgets and resources, working closely with the Bursar and ensuring educational decisions are financially informed.
- Chair meetings, working groups and investigations within delegated authority and contribute to policy development and implementation.



KEY REQUIREMENTS

PASTORAL PARTNERSHIP, BOARDING AND SAFEGUARDING

- Work closely with the Director of Pastoral Care, House staff, tutors and the safeguarding team so that academic expectations reinforce pupil wellbeing and the distinctive life of a boarding and day school.
- Maintain an active and visible presence in the School community, including assemblies, significant events and appropriate boarding and co-curricular activities.
- Uphold safeguarding duties, report concerns promptly and follow the School's safeguarding policies and the current statutory guidance.
- Support a culture in which every pupil is known, listened to, appropriately challenged and supported.

COMPLIANCE, RISK AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- Lead academic preparation for inspection and contribute to whole-school readiness for ISI, Catholic Schools Inspectorate and other applicable reviews, in collaboration with designated compliance leads.
- Support the Head in monitoring organisational risk, including use of the School's GOAT risk management system, and escalate significant risks appropriately.
- Contribute to admissions, scholarships, academic marketing, parent engagement and relationships with feeder schools, universities and external educational partners.
- Represent the School with discretion and credibility, including in meetings with Governors, parents and professional bodies.

TEACHING AND WIDER SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION

- Teach up to six periods per week, subject to the needs of the School and the demands of the senior leadership role.
- Model excellent classroom practice and participate appropriately in the co-curricular and wider life of the School.
- Undertake other reasonable duties consistent with the seniority and responsibilities of the post, as directed by the Head.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

QUALIFICATIONS

A good honours degree, recognised teaching qualification or equivalent relevant experience, and a sustained record of professional development.

EXPERIENCE

- Substantial successful leadership experience in secondary education, with demonstrable impact on teaching quality, pupil progress and academic standards.
- Credibility as an excellent teacher and a deep understanding of curriculum, assessment, inclusion and evidence-informed pedagogy.
- Ability to deputise confidently for the Head and combine strategic judgement with strong operational organisation.
- Experience of leading, developing and holding colleagues accountable, including managing change with sensitivity and resolve.
- Sound understanding of safeguarding, the Independent School Standards and the ISI inspection framework.
- Excellent communication, analytical, interpersonal and decision-making skills, with calm authority under pressure.
- Commitment to the Catholic and Benedictine ethos of Downside, and willingness to support and deepen its expression in school life.
- Commitment to equality of opportunity and to the wellbeing and development of every pupil.

DESIRABLE

- Experience of senior leadership in an independent boarding school.
- Experience of whole-school timetable, examinations, inspection or organisational risk management.
- Experience of strategic academic planning, financial decision-making and engagement with Governors.
- Postgraduate study or a recognised senior leadership qualification.



COMMITTMENT

Downside School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. All staff are expected to share this commitment and to comply with the School's safeguarding, health and safety, equality, confidentiality and data protection policies. Appointment is subject to appropriate safer recruitment checks. The postholder must maintain high standards of professional conduct and undertake relevant training.



HOW TO APPLY

Completed application forms, with a covering letter, should returned by email to **recruitment@downside.co.uk**

Please be advised should you wish to include a copy of your CV it should not be in place of the application form. Applications will only be considered if accompanied by a fully completed form.

All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement that your application has been received within two working days of sending it, please contact us either by email (HR@downside.co.uk) or by calling 01761 235105

If you have any questions in advance of submitting your application, please email recruitment@downside.co.uk

The Privacy notice and Recruitment, Selection and Disclosure Policy and Procedure are available on the Downside School website: www.downside.co.uk/about-us/employment-opportunities/

Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

The closing date for applications: **Midday, Wednesday 25 November 2026**

Interviews will take place **3 and 4 December 2026**.

We anticipate a start date of September 2027.

Please be aware that safer recruitment checks will be made at all stages of the recruitment process.

DOWNSIDE SCHOOL

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