Summer Fields
OXFORD



Director of External Relations and Development

Information for Applicants

DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Summer Fields is a boarding and day school for approximately 300 boys aged 4 to 13 years. Located in Summertown, two miles north of central Oxford, the School occupies 70 acres of exceptional grounds. This is a rare opportunity to shape the external profile and future development of one of the UK's most respected preparatory schools.

We are seeking an exceptional Director of External Relations and Development to create a coherent strategy, strengthen the School's relationships, and establish a purposeful, sustainable development function. This is a senior, highly visible role at the centre of school life. Reporting to the Headmaster and serving as a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the postholder will work in close partnership with the established Marketing Manager and Registrar.

The post-holder will be responsible for:

- External-relations strategy aligned with the School Development Plan, bringing together development, alumni, admissions, marketing, communications, partnerships and events.
- Development and fundraising, including establishing the function, shaping the case for support, cultivating donors and building long-term philanthropic income.
- Admissions partnership, working alongside the Registrar on recruitment strategy, market insight, prospective-family engagement, conversion and retention.
- Marketing and communications partnership, supporting the Marketing Manager to ensure that campaigns, content and brand activity reflect agreed strategic priorities.
- Develop relationships with current and prospective parents, alumni, feeder and senior schools, partners, donors and the wider community.
- High-quality events, briefings and public-facing activity which communicate the breadth and quality of a Summer Fields education.

The successful candidate will have:

- Substantial leadership experience in education, ideally within the independent-school sector.
- Experience of whole school development, admissions, pupil recruitment, external communications, strategic projects and stakeholder engagement.
- Outstanding written and verbal communication, judgement, diplomacy and relationship-building skills.
- The credibility to work with senior leaders and established specialists, leading through influence and collaboration.
- The energy and commercial awareness to build a development function and turn strategy into sustained action.

This is an excellent opportunity to work in a prestigious independent school in a beautiful location in Summertown. The School offers a competitive salary, a contributory pension and a wide range of staff benefits, including fee remission subject to normal admissions requirements, together with opportunities for continuing professional development. For further information about the School and an application form please visit: www.summerfields.com/recruitment.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Please apply by submitting a fully completed application form with a letter of application addressed to John Floyd, Headmaster. To satisfy the requirements for safer recruitment, we need to ask you for your full employment record. Details of any gaps between jobs or between finishing education and employment must be provided. If you have a CV you wish to send, please do so, however a completed application form with full employment history must still be provided. Applications should be saved as Word or PDF files and emailed to recruitment@summerfields.com.

Closing date: 09.00 UK time on Tuesday 24th November 2026. Interviews will be held on Thursday 26th November 2026.

If you require any further information, please call 01865 459238. We look forward to hearing from you.

Summer Fields is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and we expect all staff to share this commitment. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The School is fully committed to the principles of equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. Summer Fields does not discriminate on the grounds of race or colour, nationality or national or ethnic origins, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, age, and disability. Applications are welcome from a diverse range of backgrounds.

ABOUT SUMMER FIELDS

Summer Fields was founded in 1864 by Archibald and Gertrude Maclaren at their home in North Oxford. Mrs Maclaren was a gifted classical scholar and Mr Maclaren was a fencing master with a passionate belief in the importance of physical fitness. It is from these roots that our school motto was born: *Mens sana in corpore sano,* A healthy mind in a healthy body. The Maclarens established the importance of a breadth of education inside and outside the classroom, values which remain central to the education we offer today.

Summer Fields is a full-boarding and day school for approximately 300 boys aged 4 to 13. We offer excellent teaching, traditional values and exceptional pastoral care. We continue to build on a strong academic legacy with an individual focus on strengthening each boy's confidence and abilities.





Summer Fields is a special place and pastoral care is very strong. The School is a vibrant, extended family of staff and boys, living side-by-side in a busy, caring and friendly boarding community. We aim to ensure that each boy is happy, academically challenged and is taking full advantage of life at Summer Fields, with its many possibilities and opportunities. Our most recent ISI inspection, in June 2025, was glowing in all respects and is easily available online.

The School is thriving at all levels and in 2018 we entered an exciting new phase in our history with the opening of a brand-new Summer Fields Pre-prep school, catering for boys from Reception to Year 3. The School is housed in a stand-alone building, Newton, one of the oldest and most historic buildings on the School's 70-acre site. The building underwent a complete re-development, including the addition of a striking, modernist new extension; it now provides purpose-built facilities for up to 80 boys aged 4 to 8.

Summer Fields celebrated its 160th birthday in 2024 and recent years have seen the redevelopment of various areas of the School. The Salata Pavilion provides sports changing and other facilities, and what was New Room now provides a state-of-the-art new school library, including an archive room, a periodicals room and associated teaching rooms in what is the oldest and largest teaching space in the School. The £2.5m project, completed during lockdown, included a major refurbishment of the school Chapel, as well as the DT and Learning Support areas.

ACADEMIC RECORD

Academic standards and outcomes are high. The principal entry point to the prep school is in Year 4, although a few boys join in Years 5, 6 and 7 depending on places being available. Some 20 boys will join

the prep school from the Pre-prep each year, in addition to those joining directly, both boarders and day boys, in Year 4. Admission is by selection. The aspirations of boys and parents are high and the School prides itself on the outstanding exam results achieved by our leavers. The School's greatest academic strength is excellent teaching at all levels and we are proud of the academic achievements of boys of all abilities. Each year boys pass Common Entrance and regularly win scholarships to the top public schools in the country.

BOARDING

The boarding structure is horizontal, according to age, in six Lodges (boarding houses), where the boys are usually looked after by two Lodge Parents. Every boy has a personal tutor, responsible for overseeing all aspects of his life at school and with whom he meets regularly, one-to-one. In addition, a boy can seek help from Lodge Parents, Form Masters and Mistresses, the Head Sister and, of course, the Headmaster.

The School is set within 70 acres of grounds and is extremely well resourced with many outstanding and modern facilities, which are continually enhanced. In addition to the academic curriculum, sport plays an important part in the life of the School, as does music, art, design and technology and drama; recent results in music scholarship exams, in particular, have been outstanding. All these activities, and many others, are extremely well provided for. The Chapel is at the heart of the School, both literally and figuratively.







WORKING AT SUMMER FIELDS

Summer Fields recognises that staff are one of the School's most valuable assets. We therefore seek to recruit and retain well-qualified academic and non-academic staff who demonstrate enthusiasm for their area of expertise. There are currently around 155 full-time and part-time staff with most teaching staff and their families living on site. Working at Summer Fields is rewarding and all staff are encouraged to get fully involved with the life of the School. We are surrounded by beautiful grounds and we enjoy superb facilities.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title: Director of External Relations and Development

Reporting to: The Headmaster

Purpose of the Role

Working in close partnership with the Head and Governors, the Director of External Relations will provide strategic insight, clear messaging and market-facing leadership, ensuring that the School's ethos, vision and educational strengths are communicated with clarity, consistency and impact in an increasingly competitive independent school sector.

External Relations Strategy and Coordination

- Develop, agree and deliver a strategic external-relations plan aligned with the School Development Plan and the Headmaster's vision.
- Create clear shared priorities across development, alumni, admissions, marketing, communications, events, partnerships and community engagement.
- Convene effective planning and review arrangements with the Marketing Manager and Registrar, ensuring good communication and complementary activity.
- Lead through influence, professional credibility and collaboration, respecting colleagues' specialist expertise and avoiding unnecessary duplication of established responsibilities.
- Translate strategy into practical action plans, budgets, measures of success and regular reports to the Headmaster and Governors.
- Support the Headmaster by providing high-quality messaging, briefings, speeches, presentations and advice on reputation and stakeholder engagement.

Development and Fundraising

- Lead the School's development function, developing, and creating where necessary, appropriate systems, priorities, policies and ways of working.
- Work with the Headmaster, Bursar, Governors and Maclaren Foundation to develop a clear fundraising strategy for capital projects, bursaries, scholarships and other agreed priorities.
- Develop compelling cases for support which communicate the School's educational purpose, impact and future plans.
- Alongside the Headmaster, identify, research, and cultivate, solicit and steward prospective donors, including parents, former parents, Old Summerfieldians, trusts and foundations.
- Develop appropriate donor recognition, reporting, events, communications and societies, ensuring that stewardship is personal, consistent and proportionate.
- Maintain accurate donor and prospect records, Gift Aid and donation information, with full regard to UK GDPR, confidentiality, fundraising regulation and ethical practice.

Alumni and Community Relations

- Build an active, inclusive and mutually beneficial relationship with Old Summerfieldians, former parents and other members of the wider School community.
- Develop a purposeful programme of alumni communications, reunions, events, volunteering, mentoring and engagement.
- Strengthen relationships with local organisations, educational partners and community groups where these support the School's mission and reputation.

Admissions Partnership

- Work alongside the Registrar and Headmaster to shape pupil-recruitment, retention and relationship strategies across the Pre-prep and Prep School.
- Support the Registrar with market insight, prospective-family engagement, open events, conversion activity and the development of strong relationships with feeder schools, nurseries, senior schools, agents and professional advisers.
- Use a sound understanding of teaching, learning, pastoral care and school life to ensure that the admissions proposition is authentic, educationally credible and responsive to families' needs.
- Review recruitment and retention data with the Registrar, identify opportunities or risks and agree coordinated responses.
- Meet prospective pupils and parents, host visits and represent the School at selected recruitment, partnership and networking events in the UK and, where agreed, overseas.

Marketing, Communications and Brand Partnership

- Support the Marketing Manager to ensure that marketing and communications priorities are aligned with the School Development Plan, admissions needs and development activity.
- Support the development of clear institutional messaging which communicates Summer Fields' distinctive educational offer, ethos and ambitions.
- Contribute senior educational insight, written content and strategic briefings for publications, campaigns, the website, social media, press activity and stakeholder communications.
- Help coordinate communications across departments and ensure that development, admissions, alumni and School messages are complementary and professionally presented.
- Support open days, donor and alumni events, feeder-school engagement, community outreach, and other occasions which showcase the School.
- Facilitate the School running an inspirational programme of school trips, visits and tours that showcase the exceptional breadth and quality of a Summer Fields education.
- Build productive relationships with key stakeholders, including current and prospective parents, staff, Governors, Old Summerfieldians, donors, feeder and senior schools, the media and partner organisations.
- Represent the School confidently at meetings, events and external engagements in the UK and, where agreed, overseas.

Leadership, Resources and General Responsibilities

- Manage relevant budgets, suppliers, and projects, ensuring value for money and effective delivery.
- Use data, research and stakeholder feedback to evaluate impact, refine priorities and report clearly on progress.
- Work collaboratively across teaching, pastoral, boarding, operational and support teams and contribute fully to the Senior Leadership Team.
- Maintain confidentiality and the highest standards of professional judgement, safeguarding, data protection and ethical conduct.
- Support the aims, ethos and objectives of Summer Fields and take an active part in the life of the School.
- Comply with all health and safety procedures and the School's policies.
- All staff share responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and must adhere to the School's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Undertake any other duties reasonably requested by the Headmaster that are commensurate with the level of the post.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Experience

- Substantial successful leadership experience in schools, ideally spanning independent, preparatory, senior and/or boarding education.
- Experience of senior leadership, strategic planning, organisational development and working closely with Heads, Governors and other senior colleagues.
- Experience of admissions, pupil recruitment and retention, including engagement with prospective families and an understanding of the factors that shape parental choice.
- Experience of marketing, communications, public relations or external engagement within a school or similarly complex service environment.
- Experience of planning and delivering complex projects, managing budgets and coordinating work across several professional functions.
- Evidence of building trusted relationships and mobilising support around a compelling vision, strategic project or case for investment.
- Experience of school development, fundraising, alumni engagement or relationship-led income generation is desirable; direct major-gift experience would be advantageous but is not essential.
- Experience of establishing, launching or materially growing a school, programme, service or new educational provision is desirable.

Skills and Knowledge

- A deep understanding of independent education and the ability to articulate the value of excellent teaching, learning, pastoral care and co-curricular provision.
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to prepare clear, persuasive and audience-appropriate reports, briefings, presentations and stakeholder communications.
- Exceptional relationship-building skills and the confidence to engage parents, pupils, colleagues, Governors, alumni, donors and external partners.
- High levels of diplomacy and emotional intelligence, with the ability to support and align with established colleagues.
- Strong strategic, analytical and commercial judgement, including the ability to interpret recruitment, engagement and financial data.
- Excellent project-management, organisational and problem-solving skills, with a proven ability to move from ideas to delivery.
- Sound understanding of safeguarding, confidentiality, UK GDPR, reputation management and the responsibilities of working in a school.
- Strong digital confidence and the ability to work effectively with databases, websites, social media and Microsoft 365 applications.

Personal Attributes

- Visible, collaborative, credible and highly professional.
- Strategic and ambitious while remaining practical, adaptable and willing to undertake hands-on work.
- Resilient, discreet and calm under pressure, with sound judgement and high levels of self-awareness.
- Genuinely interested in people and motivated by long-term relationship building.
- Strong alignment with the ethos and values of Summer Fields and a willingness to contribute fully to school life.
- Commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

APPLICATION AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS GUIDANCE NOTES

Summer Fields is committed to ensuring the best possible environment for the children and young people in its care. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is our highest priority.

The School's Safeguarding Policy and Safer Recruitment Policy can be found here.

The School aims to recruit staff that share and understand our commitment and to ensure that no job applicant is treated unfairly by reason of a protected characteristic as defined within the Equality Act 2010.

APPLICATION

- Applications will only be accepted from candidates completing the relevant Application Form in full. CVs will not be accepted in substitution for completed Application Forms but are permitted to be submitted alongside a completed Application Form.
- Candidates should be aware that all posts in the school involve some degree of responsibility for safeguarding children, although the extent of that responsibility will vary according to the nature of the post. Please see the job description for the post. If you are invited to attend a formal interview your suitability to work with children will be assessed.
- As the job for which you are applying involves substantial opportunity for access to children, it is important that you provide us with legally accurate answers.
- The successful applicant will be required to complete a Disclosure Form from the Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS") for the post and, where appropriate, a check of the Barred List maintained by the DBS will be made. Any offers of appointment will be made conditional on obtaining such satisfactory checks. Additionally, successful applicants should be aware that they are required to notify the school immediately if there are any reasons why they should not be working with children.
- The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 apply to those providing early years childcare or later years childcare, including before school and after school clubs, to children who have not attained the age of 8 and to those who are directly concerned in the management of that childcare.
- The school takes its responsibility to safeguard children very seriously and any staff member and/or successful candidate who is aware of anything that may affect his/her suitability to work with children must notify the school/their manager immediately. This will include notification of any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands or warnings he/she may receive.
- Staff and/or successful candidates who are disqualified from childcare or registration may apply to Ofsted for a waiver of disqualification. Such individuals may not be employed in the areas from which they are disqualified, or involved in the management of those settings, unless and until such waiver is confirmed.
- As part of its due-diligence checks, the school will carry out an online search (which may include but is not limited to a search via an online search engine and may also extend to social media and other publicly accessible online sources) on shortlisted candidates. Any relevant matters may be discussed at interview.
- Shortlisted candidates will be asked to complete a self-declaration form in relation to their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children. Applicants will be asked to sign a declaration confirming that the information they have provided is true.
- The post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the school is therefore permitted to ask job applicants to declare all convictions and cautions on a self-declaration form in advance of attending an interview (including those which are "spent" unless they are "protected" under the DBS filtering rules) in order to assess their suitability to work with children.
- If you are currently working with children, on either a paid or voluntary basis, your current employer will be asked about disciplinary offences, including disciplinary offences relating to children or young persons

(whether the disciplinary sanction is current or time expired), and whether you have been the subject of any child protection allegations or concerns and if so the outcome of any enquiry or disciplinary procedure. Any information about past disciplinary action or substantiated allegations will be considered in the circumstances of the individual case.

- If you are not currently working with children but have done so in the past, that previous employer will be asked about those issues. Where neither your current nor previous employment has involved working with children, your current employer will still be asked about your suitability to work with children. Where you have no previous employment history, we may request character references which may include references from your school or university.
- You should be aware that provision of false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected or summary dismissal if you have been appointed, and a possible referral to the police and/or DBS.

CONDITIONAL OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

Any offer to a successful candidate will be conditional upon the following criteria:

- Receipt of at least two satisfactory references (if these have not already been received), including for internal appointments. All references should be provided by a senior person with appropriate authority, subject to the satisfaction of the school. All referees will be asked if the candidate is suitable to work with children. The school will compare any information provided by the referee with that provided by the candidate on the application form. Any inconsistencies will be discussed with the candidate.
- Verification of identity and qualifications.
- Evidence of the right to work in the UK.
- A satisfactory enhanced DBS check and if appropriate, a check of the Barred List maintained by the DBS.
- For a candidate to be employed as a teacher, a check that the candidate is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State or any sanction or restriction imposed (that remains current) by the historic General Teaching Council for England before its abolition in March 2012.
- Verification of professional qualifications, including, where applicable, any award of Qualified Teacher Status.
- Where the successful candidate has worked or been resident overseas, such checks and confirmations as the school may consider appropriate so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered. This shall include the candidate providing the school with proof of his/her past conduct as a teacher in the form of a letter of professional standing from the professional regulating authority in the country in which he/she has worked confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions, and/or that they are aware of any reason why they may be unsuitable to teach.
- Where the role involves providing care for pupils under eight, receipt of a signed Self-Declaration form showing the candidate is not disqualified from providing childcare as set out in the statutory guidance “Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (July 2018)”.
- Verification of medical and physical fitness to undertake the duties of the role in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- For a candidate to be employed into a senior management position as set out within the school’s Safer Recruitment Policy, receipt of a signed “senior charity manager positions: automatic disqualification declaration” confirming that the candidate is not disqualified from acting in a senior management position for a charity in accordance with the automatic disqualification rules for charities;
- If you are undertaking a management role, a check that you have not been prohibited from participating in the management of independent schools.

It is the school's practice that a successful candidate must complete a pre-employment health questionnaire. The information contained in the questionnaire will then be held by the school in strictest confidence and used as set out in the school’s Staff Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. This information will be reviewed against the Job Description and the Person Specification for the role, together with details of any other physical or mental requirements of the role i.e. proposed workload, extra-curricular activities, and layout of the school. The school is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010. No job offer will be withdrawn without first consulting with the applicant, considering medical evidence and considering reasonable adjustments.