



# HEAD of Dean Close St John's Preparatory School

## Recruitment Pack and Further Information

To commence in September 2024

Closing date for applications Thursday 15 February 2024





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# A Welcome from the Warden

Thank you for your interest in the role of Head at Dean Close St John's. It is a wonderful School with a rich history and an exciting future, as I hope the pages of this information pack will make clear. The role of Head becomes available as Mr Nick Thrower, who has been Head since 2021, moves on to a new post at Edgeborough School in Farnham. He and his wife Jo have been at the heart of the St John's community, strengthening both its academic and co-curricular provision, as well as its local reputation.

St John's was, for almost a hundred years, a free-standing preparatory school. In 2015 it became part of the Dean Close group of schools, and this provides the financial security and operational support that enables the school to build on its historic strengths and embark on new developments with optimism and confidence. It is a small school with a close and friendly feel, but with the safety of a wider family around it.



There is much in the School to tempt an existing or aspiring preparatory school Head; located in the lively market town of Chepstow, on the Anglo-Welsh border, overlooking Chepstow Castle and with the Severn Bridge and the M4 close by, it is both rural and well-connected. A flurry of house-building nearby is a response to the demand for homes on the western side of the bridge to support jobs in Bristol and the surrounding area. The market is growing and ready for a charismatic and strategically acute Head with conviction about the benefits of an all-round preparatory school education to draw in the new arrivals and offer their children outstanding education.

The Schools' Leadership Group, of which the Head of Dean Close St John's is a member, is a collegiate and mutually supportive group, in which the heads learn together from the triumphs and challenges that each faces, to ensure that all thrive and develop. This mix of mutual support and autonomy is a rare thing and I hope that you will feel interested enough in what the role offers to enquire further.

**Emma Taylor**  
**Warden, Dean Close Foundation**



# A brief biography of the School

St John's on-the-Hill Preparatory School was founded in the early 1920s. Mr James Mansfield designed the part of the School called Tutshill House (now known as Old House) in 1800. Sir George Bolton (a former tutor to George III's daughters) bought it in 1805 and built the impressive two storey structure overlooking the River Wye. Sir George travelled to the West Indies in 1806, dying there in 1807 so never seeing his magnificent house completed. Alterations were made in 1908, including the main gate ball finials. During the next few years, the property became the home of the Vicar of Tidenham until a Mr Gentry purchased the property in 1922 with the intention of starting a school, which opened in 1923.

Dean Close St John's has an excellent reputation for academic achievement for all, from potential scholars to those with additional needs, and offers a wealth of sport, music, drama, art and extensive co-curricular activities for every child. The School is renowned for nurturing every individual and for its family atmosphere, which is appreciated and understood by pupils, parents and staff alike. In December 2018 St John's was inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The school was graded 'excellent' for the quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements. The quality of the pupils' personal development was also rated 'excellent'.



Dean Close St John's is fully coeducational and has a small number of boarders. Pupils move on to a range of senior schools including Monmouth, Clifton, King's Gloucester and Dean Close, with many obtaining scholarships. While of course, pupils are encouraged to consider Dean Close School, the focus is on advising families on the best school for their child, and the Head maintains links with a range of senior schools. St John's has enthusiastically embraced the PSB, moving away from Common Entrance, with the support of all the senior schools it traditionally feeds.

Dean Close has a strong and distinctive Christian ethos, and the Head is expected to be supportive of this ethos and to promote it actively.

# The Role

The Head of Dean Close St John's reports to the Warden of the Dean Close Foundation, although substantial autonomy is given. The Head attends Trustees' (governors') meetings as of right, and is part of the Schools Leadership Group along with the Warden, the Operations Bursar and the Heads of Dean Close School, Dean Close Preparatory School, Dean Close Pre-Preparatory School and Dean Close Airthrie School.

The primary focus of the role is of strategic and operational leadership of Dean Close St John's, in line with the Foundation's values and strategic plan. The Head is responsible for maintaining and improving levels of academic achievement, for ensuring the quality of pastoral care for all pupils, day and boarding, and for the range and standard of co-curricular activities throughout the School.

## School numbers

The School currently educates 130 pupils from 3 to 13, but has capacity for over 200; the aspiration is for the School to grow and strengthen in numbers over the coming years. The Head has responsibility for attracting and retaining pupils of the appropriate range of abilities and potential to benefit from and contribute to the School, and for developing and enhancing the reputation of the School in the local area as an outstanding educational provider. There is a thriving nursery on the School site, and this is a significant feeder to the St John's Pre-prep, although children join at all stages, mainly from local state primary schools.

The School has its own Head of Admissions and Marketing Officer and, while these are supported by the Dean Close Directors of Admissions and Marketing, they form a local team to support the Head's plans for promoting the School and building pupil numbers.

## Staff

The Head is responsible for the recruitment, retention and development of suitably qualified and experienced staff and, with and through the Senior Leadership Team, for their deployment, appraisal and performance management. St John's secretarial and administrative staff report to the Head. The promotion of loyalty, mutual support and morale are important elements of the Head's role.

## Parents

The Head is expected to communicate frequently and effectively with parents, both formally and informally, and to maintain a high profile both in the school community and, on the School's behalf, in the local and regional area.

## Pupils

The Head sets, by example and through appropriate development of sanctions and reward systems, the standards for behaviour, presentation, courtesy, effort and aspiration. A suitable level of classroom teaching, involvement in boarding duties and other activities and leadership in assemblies and church services are all expected.

## Setting direction and strategy

The Head will be involved, through membership of the Schools Leadership Team, in setting the strategic direction for the whole Foundation, and for translating that strategy into an action plan for Dean Close St John's, ensuring the future sustainability, development and flourishing of the School and its community.



## Budgeting

With the support of the Foundation Bursar, the Head will ensure that Dean Close St John's operates in an efficient manner, taking responsibility for controlling budgets for salaries, scholarships and other expenditure.

## Terms and conditions

An attractive salary will be offered, consistent with the seniority of the role and depending on the qualifications and experience of the successful candidate. There will be private health insurance for the Head. School fee remission for the children of staff is offered as follows: (Dean Close Prep School or St John's 50%; Dean Close School 66%).

A comfortable, family home on the School site is provided, free of Council tax and utility bills. Domestic assistance is available during term time. The Head is expected to live on site for the furtherance of his or her duties.

The Dean Close Foundation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

# The Person

The successful candidate will:

- Have demonstrable enthusiasm for coeducational, broad and aspirational preparatory education.
- Show evidence of an ability to set high expectations for staff and for pupils of all levels of ability.
- Be warm, empathetic and enthusiastic, with outstanding communication skills.
- Be capable of contributing to the leadership of the Foundation and of translating the strategy into a plan for Dean Close St John's.
- Be open to new ideas, willing to innovate and confident in taking the School in new directions.
- Be comfortable in supporting the Christian ethos of the Foundation and applying it in the context of Dean Close St John's.

## Spouse and family

Dean Close St John's is a supportive, busy and thriving community, and while there is no formal expectation of the spouse or family of the Head, it is hoped that they will wish to be involved. It may be possible for the Head's spouse to be employed in an appropriate position if available, and this can be discussed during the appointment process.





# Chepstow and its surroundings

Chepstow is a small, historic market town, with a Norman castle, situated between two rivers (the Wye and the Severn) in an area of outstanding natural beauty on the border of England and Wales. This historic town is surrounded by beautiful countryside; it is part of the southern terminus of the Offa's Dyke path which offers 200 miles of stunning hiking opportunities and scenery along the English-Welsh border.



Chepstow has a number of tourist attractions with many unique and individual places to shop and eat, and where you are guaranteed a warm welcome. The history of Chepstow is fascinating with the restored Town Gate providing an impressive entrance to the town's main shopping area. Large sections of the 13th century Portwall remain standing today. The name Chepstow derives from the Old English words "Chepe" and "Stowe", meaning market and place.

As the name suggests, Chepstow grew and prospered as a market centre for local farmers. A busy port and shipyards contributed to Chepstow's wealth, particularly in the 18th and early 19th centuries, leaving a rich legacy to the town in the many buildings dating from that period. With all of the attractions, history and much more, it is not surprising that Chepstow has been voted by the Guardian newspaper as a very popular place to live. It is conveniently close to the national motorway network. Heathrow is 90minutes by car, with Bristol and Cardiff being only 30 minutes from Dean Close St John's.





# The Foundation and its Schools

The Dean Close Foundation is a growing, vibrant and diverse family of independent schools and nurseries, uniting around a shared vision and set of values. These spring from the origins of Dean Close School, which was founded in 1886 in memory of Dean Francis Close, Rector of Cheltenham and educational philanthropist. The Christian ethos of that original school continues today where the aim is that every child should be given the opportunities to flourish, underpinned by our core values of courage, contribution and love which are the guiding principles behind our educational vision.

The Foundation currently has five schools and six nurseries within its group, creating a strong community that can share best practice, ideas, resources and a secure future.

Set on a beautiful 50-acre site on the edge of Cheltenham, Dean Close Senior, Prep and Pre-Prep schools are thriving independent, co-educational day and boarding schools with around 950 pupils from ages 3 to 18. Dean Close St John's School in Chepstow educates a further 130 pupils ages 3-13, and Dean Close Airthrie School in Christ Church Road, Cheltenham, has another 80 pupils between the ages of 4-11.

The Foundation's six day nurseries form the Little Trees Nursery Group, and finally there is Dean Close Services Ltd which runs numerous courses, activities and events which make use of the varied and rich resource of the schools' facilities.

Alongside the Foundation's set of core values of Love, Courage, Contribution and Flourishing it has a set of key Skills for the Future that each school incorporates into its curriculum (the 5Cs) of Collaboration, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Compassion and Communication.

Across the schools, academic standards are high, with a broad range of abilities, and there is an exceptionally good array and quality of creative and sporting activity in addition to a strong programme of service activities.

Pastoral care is of paramount importance in all our schools, and we invest a great deal of time and resources in our young peoples physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.

The Foundation's evangelical Christian ethos remains a vital part of the School's distinctive character, although pupils of all denominations, and of none, are welcome in all our schools.





# How to Apply



Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the The Dean Close Foundation on this appointment.

For further information about the role, including details about how to apply, please visit [www.saxbam.com/appointments](http://www.saxbam.com/appointments) using reference LBMKA. Alternatively call +44 (0)20 7227 0880 (during office hours).

## Key Dates

Closing date for applications: 15 February 2024

Familiarisation visits/first round interviews: Wednesday 28 February 2024

Final interviews: Wednesday 6 March 2024

## Safeguarding

Dean Close St John's is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share in this commitment. Any offer of employment made will be subject to receipt of satisfactory references and the satisfactory outcome of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check with children's barred list.

## KCSIE Online Checks

In line with the latest KCSIE guidance, Saxton Bampfylde will conduct a search of online records that are publicly available on shortlisted candidates. These checks are used only to meet the intended purpose of the KCSIE's recommendation in relation to whether an applicant is suitable to work with children and young people. All data will be held in line with data protection regulations.

## GDPR Personal Data Notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

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