



*Be part of our School community*

# Chair of Governors

**Vacancy Information Pack**  
**July 2024**

# Statement from the current Chair of Governors



“Downe House is one of the UK’s leading boarding and day schools for girls aged 11 to 18. Established in 1907, we are ambitious for our girls and aim to create a rigorous and forward-looking learning environment, where each individual can flourish and benefit from being the member of our diverse and caring community. Our girls, supported and guided by the staff, will be the changemakers of the future who leave us with the confidence and humility to contribute positively to making our world a better place.

A sense of service lies at the heart of a Downe House and kindness, hard work and aspiration are greatly valued. Our Downe House DNA (Collaboration, Resilience, Creativity, Aspiration, Compassion, Communication and being Outward Looking) encapsulates the common characteristics that we hope every member of our community, past, present and future, will nurture in themselves and each other and equip them for our fast-changing world.

The School, with its 580 pupils and 450 staff, is a very special place. It is set on a stunning 110-acre rural estate in Berkshire within very easy access of London, Oxford, Bath and Winchester. Over recent years, the Board has continued to support the development of the Estates and enhancement of the facilities through its own prudent financial management, as well as through fund-raising and the development of additional revenue streams. We do not believe we can afford

to stand still and investment in the School’s IT infrastructure, use of AI, teacher training and development, as well as maintaining the delivery of high-quality academic and pastoral education have all been high on the Board’s agenda. The School is now looking to appoint a Chair of Governors to lead and direct the Governing Body, set the agenda and strategy (in collaboration with the Headmistress) and ensure it is an effective team leading the School’s strategic vision. The successful Chair must promote a culture of openness and debate and is responsible for enabling effective communication and collaboration with the leadership team and all relevant stakeholders.”

*Mrs Fru Hazlitt*  
*Chair of Governors, Downe House*



# Job Description – Chair of Governors



Downe House is looking to appoint a Chair of Governors to provide strategic leadership to the Governing Body of the School, at both an exciting and challenging time in education and for independent schools.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### Strategic Leadership and Direction

To ensure that the governors work as an effective team and understand their accountability and the part they play in the strategic leadership of the school and in overseeing the delivery of the agreed strategy of the School.

To hold leaders to account for the educational and financial performance, business management, and educational outcomes of the School.

To collaborate with internal stakeholders to develop the School's revenue streams and drive our ambition to remain a leader in the independent girls' boarding and day school sector.

To understand national and regional educational priorities and the implications of these in line with the strategic goals of the School.

To ensure that the School's operational planning and improvement objectives set out by the Head and the Leadership Team contribute to strategic priorities.

To ensure governors understand the scope of issues in question and are clear about decisions they need to make.

To ensure the governing body monitors its own effectiveness in relation to the strategic priorities and in the context of the legal and regulatory environment, with due regard for reputational risk.

To ensure that governors have sight of and understand the risks.

To ensure the governing body is forward looking and aware of, and prepared for, formal external scrutiny.

### Regulatory Compliance

To support the governors to understand the legal frameworks and context in which the School operates and all of the requirements with which it must comply with in relation to framework for governance and Charity and Company Law.

To ensure that the Governing Body has access to all relevant training required and that which would be beneficial through the Clerk and the School.





To ensure that statutory requirements and regulations are met and that Governing Body business is conducted efficiently and effectively.

To ensure that the School has an appropriate governance structure and the School's Constitution and the Governing Body's performance are reviewed regularly

To allow for each Governor to be appraised annually in respect of their contribution to the Governing Body.

To delegate sufficient authority to Governing Body sub-committees and the Head, to enable the School to carry on its business effectively between Governing Body meetings.

To ensure that the Governing Body has the necessary skills to govern the School effectively and has access to relevant external professional advice and expertise.

### **Relationship with the Head**

To develop an effective working relationship which is mutually supportive whilst being a critical friend, offering sufficient challenge and encouragement.

To ensure that rigorous targets are set for the Head linked to the strategic objectives of the Governing Body.

To oversee and participate in the Head's performance review, ensuring that processes are understood and followed & appropriate continuing professional development is provided.

To be available to the Head, make time to listen to concerns and give constructive advice.

To lead the process for the search and appointment of a new Head as and when required.

### **Collaborative Working with Stakeholders and Partners**

To ensure that the Head consults parents, pupils, staff and the wider community in decision-making as appropriate and reports back to the governors.

To ensure that different perspectives, viewpoints and dissenting voices are properly taken into account and guide the team to reach consensus.

To create an atmosphere of open, honest, inclusive discussion, foster a supportive working relationship with key stakeholders including the Board, staff, pupils, parents and carers.

To chair meetings in a way which embodies the culture, values and ethos of the School.

To build an effective team by ensuring governors understand the role they play in the governance structure.





To pro-actively consider succession planning so that the necessary skills, experience, diversity and expertise is available for the ongoing effectiveness of the Governing Body.

To create a systematic, open and fair procedure for the recruitment of new Governors, committee members, future Chairs enabling all appointees to receive appropriate induction, advice, information and training.

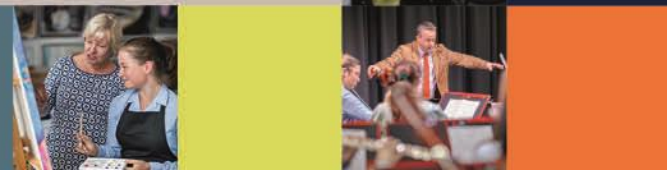
To attend and encourage other governors to attend school functions and be accessible to other governors and, as appropriate, to staff and parents.

*Governors are appointed for a 3 year term and may serve a maximum of 3 terms.*

*Downe House is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment and adhere to, and comply with, the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures at all times.*

*The successful candidate will have to undergo an Enhanced DBS check and a social media check.*

*We promote equality of opportunity and support an environment that values and promotes diversity inclusion.*



# Person Specification



## The ideal candidate will demonstrate the following skills and abilities:

- An active interest in education as well as voluntary services to the community
- An understanding of the regulatory and legal compliance requirements of School governance
- Strong written and oral communication and presentation skills
- Ability to lead and contribute effectively to financial and strategic planning
- Make reasoned decisions and to act honestly, diligently and in good faith
- Negotiation and diplomacy skills
- Ability to build and get the best out of a team
- Demonstrate critical listening and questioning skills
- Demonstrate analytical and problem-solving abilities
- Capacity to process information quickly and understand relevant data
- Ability to chair meetings well
- Good organisational skills
- A commitment to and understanding of the ethos of Downe House and a willingness to promote it within the community
- Improving quality and raising standards
- Making the time commitment required of the chair to effectively carry out the role

- Promoting equality and diversity
- Work within a framework of collective decision-making

## How to Apply

We welcome applications from the widest possible diversity of backgrounds and all appointments are made on merit following a fair and transparent process.

If you would like to be considered for the position, please submit an up-to-date CV with a covering letter explaining why you believe you would be suitable for the role by 07 September 2024 to [recruitment@downehouse.net](mailto:recruitment@downehouse.net). We plan to hold the first stage interviews online and the second and final stage on site at Downe House School in September.

If you would like a confidential, informal discussion about the role or to arrange a visit to the School please contact the Clerk to the Governors, Edward Valletta [vallettae@downehouse.net](mailto:vallettae@downehouse.net)

