

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

CANDIDATE INFORMATION




WELCOME

It has been a great pleasure to serve as a Trustee of Oakham School for over a decade and as Chair of Trustees since 2017.

Whilst conscious of the current challenges in the sector, I am optimistic for Oakham's ongoing place as a thriving co-educational school offering a broad and inspiring education to a diverse selection of pupils and playing its part in the local community. The enthusiasm for our values, aims and objectives of providing a rich and balanced education to equip pupils for their futures remains undiminished.

I have been proud to work alongside many dedicated Trustees during my tenure, and my successor will inherit a very able and experienced Board, which is utterly committed to the success of the School. The relationship between the Chair and the Headmaster is key, and it has been a rewarding experience working alongside Henry Price and the Senior Leadership Team as successors to a proud tradition of leadership and care for pupils that goes back 440 years. I commend Oakham School, its rich past and strong future to anyone considering taking on the role of Chair of Trustees.

Whilst I will not have a formal role to play in the appointment of my successor, I will be available to assist in any way I can, both before and after the appointment.



PROFESSOR NEIL T GORMAN DL
Chair of Trustees



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in the vital role of Chair of Trustees at Oakham School. In our 440th year, we look forward to the decade ahead with realism and optimism about the challenges and opportunities ahead.

We are clear about our Priority and our Purpose and have clear plans to move the School forwards. We are blessed with a fabulous campus, dedicated staff and fantastic pupils. We are also fortunate to be supported by parents who continue to value our genuine commitment to holistic co-education in a community that is a vibrant mix of boarding and day pupils of multiple backgrounds and nationalities.

The next Chair of Trustees will be leading a school with a strong culture of governance and will inherit a Board that is selflessly committed to seeing the School thrive.

The Senior Leadership Team and I, as well as the whole school community, look forward to working with whomever is appointed as Oakham moves on to its 450th anniversary and beyond.

HENRY PRICE

Headmaster





ABOUT US

Oakham School is a rich and balanced community of over 900 pupils aged 11 to 18, with 50:50 girls and boys and 50:50 boarders and day pupils. It was founded in 1584 by Archdeacon Robert Johnson and is in the heart of Oakham, the county town of Rutland. The purpose of the School is to teach the pupils knowledge, skills and values to thrive and confidently contribute to Oakham School and beyond. The four core values of Care, Courage, Contribution and Connection represent the qualities which the School wishes to inspire and instil in all pupils and that will guide them throughout their lives.

Our priority is the care and wellbeing of our pupils. We do not simply have an eye to a fast-changing future but are clear that these school years are precious, formative and the springboard for future success and happiness. Working with parents, we will provide an environment that balances support and challenge, stability and change to give our children security and confidence.

Our education is, therefore, deliberately and distinctively holistic. As artificial intelligence accelerates, society evolves, and new jobs emerge, our human intelligence, values, and skills grow in importance yet remain constant. We have developed a carefully constructed Connected Curriculum, which flows through the School, teaching knowledge, skills and values across the academic, co-curricular and pastoral spheres. We will articulate the need to think, communicate, interact, self-regulate and discern the truth. We will focus on our deeply embedded pastoral care and pastoral learning alongside academic excellence, enabling pupils to know themselves and understand others, where mental health, consent and digital awareness are as important as algebra and grammar.

We will continue to provide a rich co-curriculum as a place for joy, friendship, and new experiences, as an integral part of learning, where timeless skills such as teamwork, leadership, and communication are enhanced, and values are tested and strengthened.

Our school successfully combines the rhythm and benefits of a great boarding school with a diverse, dynamic and distinctive mix of day and boarding pupils. From 2025, we are focusing on a clear 11-18 journey, with pupils from Years 7 to 13 receiving all the benefits of a senior school education with suitably tailored pastoral structures and support. Our well-established House System will see greater integration of day and boarding pupils throughout the day and bespoke, modern boarding to suit all forms of boarding pupils and families. With over 50 years of experience in co-education, we will build further on the pioneering vision of Headmaster John Buchanan, celebrating our 50:50 balance of girls and boys.

Our community is warm and welcoming, and we have a duty to maintain this beautiful place where pupils and adults belong, grow and flourish together. We wish to strengthen our links with our local schools and partners whilst also looking outwards to bring the wider world back into Oakham. We wish to foster and extend a sense of partnership, philanthropy, and, above all, friendship with parents, alumni and all those who know and care for the School.

Oakham School is a special place with 440 years of experience and a bright vision for the future. Our motto says 'vitai lampada tradunt' – they pass on the torch of life. As we look to the future, we take that responsibility seriously and hope current and future Oakhamians, their families, our colleagues and friends can be proud of who we are and what we can be.

Further information about the vision for the future of Oakham School can be found [here](#).



GOVERNANCE

The Board currently comprises 17 including the Chair, whose biographies can be found on our website [here](#). The Trustees have a wide range of experience and skills, along with an excellent understanding of the day-to-day operation of the School. Trustees serve on a range of committees of the Board, which include the following:

- Finance
- Buildings and Estates (sub-committee of Finance)
- Education
- Pastoral and Safeguarding
- Policy and Compliance
- Awards (bursaries and scholarships)
- Oakham School Enterprises
- Nominations (ad hoc)
- Elizabethan Trust (management of investment funds)
- Foundation Board (development/fundraising)

Full Board meetings take place four times a year – two in the Autumn Term and one each in the Spring and Summer Terms. While the Chair of Trustees is the chair of the Full Board, each of the other committees has its own Chair, and the Chair of Trustees is able to decide which of those meetings to attend.

The School Leadership Team, headed up by Henry Price, comprises 13 members of staff. The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is also the Clerk to the Trustees to ensure that the Board, its sub-committees and members have timely and effective information, as well as ensuring compliance with company and charity laws and regulations.

The Assistant Clerk to the Trustees provides administrative support.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Oakham School is seeking a Chair of Trustees to succeed Professor Neil Gorman, who will retire from the Board in July 2025. It is hoped that his successor will be appointed to the Board as a Trustee from the Spring Term of 2025 to allow for a period of handover before taking over as Chair from August 2025.

The Trustees are seeking someone with a real commitment to the School and to the education and development of the pupils. While the role is voluntary, the Chair of Trustees will have the opportunity to:

- Shape the future of an independent school with a strong reputation.
- Develop governance and leadership skills in a dynamic educational environment.
- Make a lasting impact on pupils, staff, and the broader school community.



THE ROLE

The role of Chair of Trustees is both stimulating and challenging. It requires active engagement while remaining explicitly non-executive and pro bono. The Chair of Trustees plays a pivotal role in leading the governance of Oakham School, ensuring it achieves its aims, purpose, and strategic and operational objectives while remaining true to its ethos and values. This is a voluntary position that requires a strategic thinker, strong leadership skills, and a passion for education.

The role requires attendance at Board meetings (usually four or five times a year), committee meetings, and occasional events at the School. Additional time will be needed for preparation and ad hoc responsibilities.

Key responsibilities include:

GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

- Lead the Board of Trustees to ensure the School's governance aligns with legal, regulatory, and ethical standards.
- Work collaboratively with the Headmaster and Senior Leadership Team to set the School's strategic vision and goals.
- Foster an inclusive, professional and effective working environment for Trustees.

STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

- Guide the School in achieving its long-term objectives, balancing educational excellence and pastoral care with financial sustainability.

- Be the catalyst for the continuous development of the School's strategic plan and monitor its implementation, ensuring progress is regularly reviewed and adjusted as needed.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

- Build effective relationships with other Trustees, fostering collaboration and leveraging their expertise.
- Act as the primary point of contact between the Board of Trustees and the Headmaster, providing support, guidance, and constructive challenge.
- Represent the School to key stakeholders, including parents, staff, alumni, donors and the local community.

OPERATIONAL DUTIES

- Chair regular Board meetings, ensuring clear agendas, productive discussions and actionable outcomes. Participate in committee meetings as appropriate.
- Oversee the recruitment, induction, and professional development of Trustees to ensure a well-rounded and skilled Board.
- Ensure compliance with safeguarding, health and safety, and equality and diversity requirements.

FINANCIAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- Oversee the School's financial health, working with the Finance Committee and senior leaders to ensure budgets are balanced and resources are well managed.
- Identify and mitigate potential risks to the School's operations, reputation and sustainability.





PERSON SPECIFICATION

Qualifications and Experience

Essential:

- Proven experience in a senior leadership or governance role within the education sector, nonprofit organisations or relevant fields.
- Demonstrable experience of chairing meetings, committees, or boards effectively.
- Familiarity with charity governance, legal duties, and financial accountability.
- Experience in strategic planning and driving organisational improvement.
- Commitment to the care and safeguarding of children and young people.

Desirable:

- Experience in the independent school sector, either as a trustee, parent or professional.
- Professional qualifications or significant experience in education, finance, law, or human resources.
- Knowledge of safeguarding practices and regulatory requirements in education.

Skills and Competencies

Leadership and Governance:

- Strong leadership and interpersonal skills, with the ability to inspire confidence and guide discussions constructively.
- Ability to lead and collaborate with a diverse Board of Trustees, fostering effective decision-making and collective responsibility.

Strategic Thinking:

- Capacity to think strategically, set long-term goals, and prioritise objectives in the best interests of the School.
- Ability to challenge constructively and hold the School Leadership Team accountable for delivering on agreed objectives.

Communication and Relationship Building:

- Exceptional communication skills, including the ability to represent the School effectively to a variety of stakeholders.
- Strong relationship-building skills, with the ability to engage with Trustees, staff, parents, and external stakeholders diplomatically.

Analytical Skills:

- Competence in analysing complex issues, including financial, legal, and regulatory matters, and making informed decisions.
- Ability to interpret financial statements, school performance data and risk assessments.

Integrity and Commitment:

- A strong commitment to the ethos, values and educational mission of the School.
- Personal integrity and the ability to act in the best interests of the School without conflicts of interest.

Personal Attributes

- Passionate advocate for education and independent schools, with a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the sector.
- Empathetic and approachable, with a focus on supporting the wellbeing of pupils and staff.
- Resilient, adaptable, and open to change, with a solution-focused mindset.

Time Commitment

- Willingness to dedicate sufficient time to fulfil the responsibilities of the role, including attendance at Board meetings, school events, and strategic planning sessions.
- Availability for regular meetings with the Headmaster and key school staff.
- Under normal circumstances, the role requires attendance at Board meetings (usually four or five times a year, including preparation), committee meetings, and occasional events at the School. On occasions, unanticipated situations may arise, requiring an additional time commitment.



APPLICATIONS

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics by email or telephone to arrange a confidential discussion with either Lucy Walsh Waring or Louisa Barham, who are leading this search:

- Lucy Walsh Waring, Senior Advisor
07780 672199 / lucywalsh-waring@rsacademics.com
- Louisa Barham, Search Consultant
07770 928537 / louisabarham@rsacademics.com

Those whose interest is taken further will be invited to meet the members of the Nominations Committee and with the Headmaster, Henry Price. All this can be handled in confidence.

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service, and a review of their social media presence. All appointments are subject to a criminal background check and proof of qualifications in accordance with the requirements of the Children Act.

Founded in 2002 by Russell Speirs, RSAcademics specialises in schools in the UK and internationally, advising on marketing strategy and research, leadership consultancy and the search and selection of Heads and senior staff. Comprising a team of the best schools' marketing professionals and respected former school leaders, RSAcademics provides a high-quality service to schools with rigour, experience and warmth. Please visit www.rsacademics.co.uk for more information.

