



Dale Avenue, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 8LP

HEADTEACHER APPLICATION PACK



Headteacher Required for September 2025

11 – 16 Mixed Comprehensive

Number on roll: 1,260

Group: Group 7

HEADTEACHER Salary Range L29 – L36 (£99,067 - £117,601)

A rare opportunity to recruit a talented, enthusiastic and energetic leader to join our highly successful school as Headteacher has arisen due to retirement.

The school is situated at the foot of the beautiful South Downs. Downlands Community School has a reputation for excellent academic results, extra-curricular activities, outstanding pastoral care and is totally committed to inclusion. The school provides an ambitious curriculum that nurtures learners to develop the skills to lead fulfilling lives and participate fully in society.

We are committed to putting diversity, equity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do for everyone in our community. We strive to recruit, retain and advance people of all backgrounds and particularly encourage applications from individuals who are underrepresented amongst school leaders.

The Governors are committed to appointing an inspirational leader to continue the school's successful journey. Candidates should therefore:

- Be a creative and strategic thinker who ensures that learning is central to the life of the school
- Be able to lead and inspire a highly committed and talented staff team
- Demonstrate strong evidence of preparation for the challenge of the post
- Have excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Be able to challenge existing practices in a drive for continuous improvement
- Be committed to developing the school ethos, vision and values
- Have good financial/budgetary experience

We look forward to meeting you and receiving your application.

An application pack can be downloaded from our website <http://www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk> under "Information – Vacancies" or from our Recruitment Officer Phina Johnson – email SJohnson@downlands.org or telephone 01273 847734. **Completed applications must be sent to htapplications@downlands.org**

Pre application visits are encouraged and can be arranged for the following dates:

Monday 24 February at 11.30 **Thursday 27 February at 09.15**

Wednesday 5 March at 09.15 **Thursday 6 March at 11.30**

Please contact the Headteacher's PA, Mrs Anscombe, email:

canscombe@downlands.org or telephone 01273 845892 to arrange.

Closing Date for Applications: Mid-day on 21 March 2025

Shortlisting completed by: Thursday 27 March 2025

Interviews: Wednesday 2 April and Thursday 3 April

Start Date: September 2025

Downlands is committed to safeguarding and all applicants must be willing to undergo screening including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Dear Applicant,

Post of Headteacher - Downlands Community School

Thank you for the interest you have expressed in becoming Headteacher at Downlands.

The Governing Board are looking to recruit a talented, enthusiastic and energetic leader to join our highly successful school. The school is situated at the foot of the beautiful South Downs. It has a reputation for excellent academic results and extra-curricular activities with outstanding pastoral care. The most recent self-evaluation rates the school as good in all areas.

We consistently attract high-calibre staff and the school is well staffed with specialist teachers across curriculum and pastoral teams. Some years ago, we established the Mid Sussex Federation of Schools which is an informal arrangement with three similar West Sussex secondary schools. This has enabled us to develop stronger cooperation between the headteachers, and this is something that the successful candidate can expect to benefit from.

I am pleased to attach an application pack which includes Job Description, Person Specification, and General School Information. You will also find a substantial amount of information on the school website at <https://www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk>.

We hope this will encourage you to visit Downlands and tours of the school are warmly encouraged. Please contact Mrs Caron Anscombe on 01273 843378 to make an appointment.

Please complete a West Sussex County Council application form which is a stand-alone Word document on our website under "Information - Vacancies". In your letter of application, please address the person specification and provide evidence of impact from your current/past experience by making reference, where appropriate, to what you have learned about school leadership. Your letter should be no more than 2 sides of A4. No font size smaller than 10).

Applications should reach the school no later than mid-day on Friday 21 March 2025. Please email your completed application to htapplications@downlands.org.

Shortlisted candidates will be notified by telephone by the end of Thursday 27 March 2025, formally confirmed in writing. Interviews will be held in the school on Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 April 2025. Shortlisted candidates will receive further details of the arrangements for the interview, including the names of governors on the interviewing panel.

Downlands is committed to safeguarding and all applicants must be willing to undergo screening including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

I look forward to receiving your application.

Yours sincerely,



Diana M Hunt
Chair of Governors

Information about Downlands Community School

We are very proud of our outstanding school which has an incredible staff team of leaders, teachers and support staff who are dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of education for the young people in our community.

We are committed to placing learning at the heart of everything we do, and we believe that this is demonstrated in the outstanding outcomes our students achieve. We are passionate about developing student's character through the curriculum and through participation in a wide range of extra curriculum activities and our character passport.

We are extremely proud of our student's achievement, their conduct and care for each other and their contribution to the leadership of the school.

“Pupils and staff are proud to be a part of the school community. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn and see their friends.” OFSTED 2024

Our Community

As a community school, Downlands prides itself on fostering strong connections with the local community. The school works in partnership with families and local organisations to support the development of students into responsible and active citizens.

Downlands Community School is situated the village of Hassocks, at the foot of the South Downs National Park. This setting provides a unique environment for learning and also offers numerous opportunities for outdoor education and activities.

The school's catchment is centred around the villages of Hassocks and Hustpierpoint as well as providing places for the local villages of Albourne, Poynings, Fulking, Sayers Common, Pyecombe, Keymer and Ditchling.



Achievement

Downlands is committed to achieving the very best outcomes for the students in our community to provide them with greatest possible opportunities for the future.

We are rightly proud of the results our students have achieved over the last 3 years. These results reflect our dedication to high quality teaching and to fostering an environment where all students thrive, regardless of their starting point.

Progress 8 Scores

- **Current Progress 8 Score: +0.53**
- **3-Year Average Progress 8 Score: +0.54**

Attainment 2024

- **Percentage of Grades at 4+: 81%**
- **Percentage of Grades at 5+: 69%**
- **Percentage of Grades at 7+: 33%**
- **Percentage of Grades at 8+: 19%**

Ability Group Performance (3-Year Average Progress 8 Scores)

- **Low Ability Pupils: +0.48**
- **Middle Ability Pupils: +0.6**
- **High Ability Pupils: +0.47**

Curriculum

At Downlands Community School, our curriculum design is driven by four core ambitions:

Outstanding Outcomes: Our ambition is to enable all students to achieve outcomes, so as to provide our students with the very best opportunities when they leave Downlands

To Thrive In Their Next Stage of Learning: We aim to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and character needed to thrive in their next stage of learning. Whether they are moving on to further education, training, or employment, we want our students to be well-prepared for the challenges ahead.



Promoting Happiness, Well-being and Community: We want to equip all students with the knowledge and character to be able to lead happy, healthy lives, as active members of their community.

Providing Culturally Enriching Experiences: We are committed to providing all students with the opportunities to participate in a wide range of enriching activities which give them the cultural capital to be successful in the future beyond Downlands.

Leaders have worked hard to develop curricula which are sequenced and constructed to clear end points which enable students to acquire the essential knowledge and skills to be successful at KS4 and to prepare them to thrive in their next stage of learning.

The curriculum was rightly recognised as a strength of the school in most recent OFSTED inspection.

“Leaders have had a sharp focus on improving the curriculum, so that it is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)... the curriculum is well sequenced, so that pupils build securely on their knowledge over time. Pupils in all key stages successfully use previously learned knowledge to understand new information.”

The curriculum is designed around the four principles of PACE;

- **Pedagogy:** A curriculum designed with knowledge and understanding of cognitive science
- **Ambition:** An ambition for all students to achieve outstanding outcomes and, the knowledge and skills to thrive in the next stage of learning
- **Coherence:** A well sequenced curriculum which understands students starting points and the end of key stage 2 and builds towards clearly defined and ambitious end points at key stage 4.
- **Equity:** A curriculum which is designed to enable all students, especially disadvantaged and SEND students to achieve outstanding outcomes.

Teaching and Learning

There is a strong focus on high quality teaching and learning which is driven by an ambitious teaching and learning policy. The 6 principles encapsulate our beliefs about highly effective teaching and are based around a sharp understanding of cognitive science and evidence based best practice.

The 6 Principles:

High Expectations for All
Literacy and Numeracy
Promoting Deep Thinking

Classroom Culture
Exposition
Assessment and Feedback

Inclusive Practice

A significant amount of work has been completed since our last inspection in developing consistent and effective adaptative practice across the school. A key aspect of this work has been to provide impactful training through our professional learning programme in adaptative teaching. This has been supported through the development of pupil passports which provide teachers with clear information about how students can be best supported in lessons.

The school has maintained a sharp focus on reading and developed a curriculum pathway to remove reading as a barrier for our lowest readers throughout KS3.

This has been supported by the development of disciplinary reading strategies through our professional learning to programme to make the teaching of reading a visible feature of all lessons.

The ROCKS

We are very proud of our work on character education based around the character principles of the ROCKS; Resilience, Optimism, Community, Kindness and Self Awareness. The ROCKS underpins our rewards and sanctions.

A core ambition as part of our character education programme is to increase the participation of all students in extra curricula activities. The school has worked hard to develop a wider range of clubs and activities which will engage all students. This in combination with a targeted approach by the leader of our character education programme has led to a significant increase in participation levels for all students especially the disadvantaged.

The Downlands Character Passport

A key element of the character education programme has been the establishment of the Downlands Character passport. The passport is a commitment to provide all students with a range of culturally enriching experiences to develop student's character and cultural capital.

Year 7	OPTIMISTIC: Theatre Day: Wicked or Lion King	COMMUNITY Volunteering Day: Supporting our local community	RESILIENCE: Year 7 Camp (July)
Year 8	SELF-AWARE Museum Visit: Houses of Parliament or Science Museum or Tower of London	KIND Sustainability Day: Wakehurst Place or Arundel Wetland Centre	RESILIENCE: Curriculum Enrichment Activities (July)
Year 9	OPTIMISTIC: Careers Day in School	KIND: First Aid Course	KIND: Appreciation Day: Opal Coast and Somme Trip (June)
Year 10	SELF AWARE Business Enterprise Day: Dragons Den Activities in school	OPTIMISTIC University Day: Visit to University of Sussex	COMMUNITY: Work Experience Leadership roles

Diversity

At Downlands School we have made significant progress in developing our approach to diversity, it is our ambition;

"...to build an inclusive and welcoming school in which all members of our community feel that their identity is welcomed and celebrated and their voices and experiences are valued. Our ambition is that all members of Downlands feel a deep sense of belonging." Diversity Ambition statement

Our commitment to diversity was recognised in our achievement of the nationally recognised Equaliteach silver award. The award recognised our work on developing inclusive policies and practice, the development of our curricula to recognise and celebrate diversity and, the impact of student diversity groups.

Leadership

At Downlands, we believe that everyone is a leader. Our distinct approach to leadership is grounded in the core belief that "Effective Leadership improves the performance of others and leads to improved outcomes for students."

This philosophy is embedded in our leadership processes, which involve developing 'Ambition Statements' through a sharp understanding of our context and delivering impactful changes through considered implementation planning. This approach is embraced by senior leaders, middle leaders, support staff team leaders, and student leaders.



Federation

Downlands Community School is a committed member of the Mid Sussex Federation, a collaborative network of local schools. This partnership enables each school to retain its autonomy and distinctive ethos while benefiting from shared ideas and best practices. Through this collaboration, we aim to enhance the educational experiences and outcomes for all students within the federation.



One of the key components of our partnership is the peer-to-peer review process. Schools within the federation regularly conduct peer reviews, providing valuable feedback and insights to one another. This process fosters a culture of

continuous improvement, ensuring that each school can identify areas for development and implement effective strategies for enhancement.

The Mid Sussex Federation places a strong emphasis on joint professional development. By working together, teachers and staff from different schools engage in shared learning opportunities, collaborative planning and training sessions.

Job Description: Headteacher

Job Title: Headteacher

Reports To: Governing Board

Job Purpose:

To provide strategic leadership and management for the school, ensuring high-quality education for all students.

Key Responsibilities:

Leadership and Governance

Vision and Values:

- Develop and communicate a clear vision that inspires and motivates the school community
- This vision should be based on an astute understanding of the school's context and its strengths and weakness
- Articulate, model and demonstrate the practices which will contribute to creating a school culture of high expectations based around the school values of the ROCKS to all members of the community, senior leaders and middle leaders

Strategic Leadership:

- Provide strategic direction and leadership, ensuring the school's aims and objectives are met
- Prioritise, allocate and manage resources (financial, human and educational) sustainably and effectively to achieve the school's strategic priorities

Governance:

- Work effectively with the governing board to agree the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and to ensure compliance with statutory requirements
- Provide the Governing Board with regular feedback on the progress of the school towards its strategic plans

Staff Well-being:

- Prioritise staff well-being, ensuring a supportive and sustainable work environment

Quality of Education

Curriculum Development:

- Lead staff who are responsible for curriculum design to implement a broad, balanced, and inclusive curriculum
- Ensure that the curriculum provides students with secure, deep and fluent knowledge to enable future learning and to prepare all students for their next steps
- Ensure that the curriculum develops students fluency in reading and writing and mathematics
- Ensure that leaders have a clear understanding of ambitious end points for all students

Teaching and Learning:

- Lead staff who are responsible for the implementation of high-quality teaching and learning, ensuring that all students acquire and retain knowledge over time
- Ensure that teachers are expert in checking understanding, identifying gaps in knowledge, and adapting their teaching to meet the needs of all students

Assessment and Feedback:

- Lead staff with responsibility for Teaching & Learning to implement effective assessment practice to monitor and support student progress towards clearly defined end points, and provide regular feedback to students and parents

Achievement

Monitoring Progress:

- Ensure that all students make exemplary progress across the curriculum
- Ensure that student progress is monitored and tracked and ensure that leaders make impactful interventions to enable all students to make exemplary progress
- Ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are supported to achieve strongly across the curriculum and their progress is sustained over time

Behaviour and Attitudes

Positive Environment:

- Establish a culture of high expectations for all pupils based around the school's values of ROCKS
- Maintain a positive, predictable, and safe environment for all members of our community
- Build strong and supportive relationships with pupils, parents and carers
- Embed and sustain a culture where pupils are positive about their learning

Inclusive Practices:

- Ensure that behaviour policies are fair and consistently applied, making reasonable adjustments for students with specific needs

Attendance

Strategic Leadership of Attendance:

- Lead the staff responsible for attendance, to closely monitor attendance data at whole-school and group levels, to identify patterns and trends at Downlands
- Develop, establish and embed a strategic response to attendance which leads to notable and sustained improvements for groups and individuals
- Ensure that all staff promote high attendance and provide them with the skills and training to support individuals with improved attendance
- Ensure that leaders work collaboratively with families, local schools, local authorities, and other partners to improve attendance

Inclusive Attendance Culture:

- Build a culture of community and belonging, ensuring that all students feel valued, safe, and understood. Provide suitable support for students with attendance challenges, including those with mental or physical health issues and SEND

Personal Development

Student Well-being:

- Promote the personal development and well-being of all students, ensuring they are prepared for life beyond school
- Ensure that there are wider opportunities for all students to participate in events and activities which support the development of the Downlands

ROCKS and, provide students with the cultural capital to enable them to be successful beyond Downlands Community School

- Ensure that Careers Provision is of high quality, structured sequenced effectively and fully integrated into the curriculum
- Ensure that there is an impactful, sequenced Personal Development curriculum which is delivered by trained staff
- Ensure that all staff are actively vigilant in supporting and caring for students and that relevant staff have the expertise to provide high quality care
- Ensure the school works in partnership with parents and carers, and with external agencies to provide pupils with the best possible support and care

Inclusion

Inclusive Practices:

- Develop and implement inclusive practices across all areas of the school's work, ensuring that all students feel welcome, valued, and a sense of belonging
- Ensure that leaders have established a culture in which all staff are highly vigilant in identifying barriers to learning or well-being

Identifying and Meeting Needs:

- Work with leaders to ensure that they quickly and accurately identify students who face barriers to their learning or well-being and ensure they receive effective support, drawing on external specialists as necessary
- Make certain that leaders systematically monitor and review strategies introduced to remove barriers for groups and individuals and ensure that helpful and proactive adaptations are made when appropriate
- Ensure that leaders identify and meet the needs of disadvantaged students and those with SEND with adaptations whilst maintaining high expectations

Safeguarding

Culture:

- Ensure that safeguarding and child protection policies are implemented effectively, creating a safe environment for all students
- All staff are vigilant and carry out their responsibilities effectively
- Ensure that all staff are fully trained and that systems are in place for students to report concerns

Person Specification:
(A = Application, I = Interview)

Qualifications	Essential	Desirable	Evidence
Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)	x		A
Successful completion of the NPQH		x	A
Recent relevant CPD		x	A
Further professional qualification linked to education and/or leadership		x	A
Leadership skills and experience			
Significant experience in senior leadership roles within a school setting	x		A/I
Outstanding classroom practioner	x		A/I
Strong and visible presence within the school community	x		I
Ability to develop and communicate a clear vision and set of values that inspire and motivate the school community	x		A/I
Strong understanding of strategic planning and expertise in using implementation models to produce sustainable and impactful change	x		A/I
Expertise in whole school self-evaluation and school development planning	x		A/I
Expertise in planning, leading and delivering whole school CPD	x		A/I
Expertise and knowledge of best practice in specialist areas of school leadership (curriculum, high quality teaching, professional development, assessment, behaviour, attendance inclusion and organisational management)	x		A/I
A proven track record of delivering sustainable and impactful change and the ability to empower colleagues to deliver impactful change	x		A/I
Demonstrate an understanding of resource planning (including financial), allocation, and management within an educational setting	x		A/I
Understanding of procurement of contracts and facilities in an educational setting	x		A/I
Ability to establish, implement and monitor systems, processes and policies	x		A/I
A strong ability to build and sustain effective partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including parents, carers, local schools, Federation, community organisations, external and other professional bodies	x		A/I

A highly effective communicator with strong interpersonal skills	x		A/I
An astute understanding of the latest educational issues and future trends in schools and education	x		A/I
Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of all educational statutory requirements, ensuring the school complies with relevant laws, regulations, and guidelines to provide a safe and effective learning environment	x		A/I
Expertise in the use of data to inform decision-making, drive school improvement, and enhance student outcomes through precise analysis and interpretation	x		A/I
Demonstrate moral purpose and is able and willing to hold people to account	x		A/I
Demonstrate total commitment to and a clear understanding of inclusion	x		A/I
Evidence of successful management and leadership of individuals and teams	x		A/I
Personal Qualities and Values			
Absolute commitment to the moral purpose of education and the value of education for all groups of students	x		A/I
Ability to foster a sense of belonging for all in the school community	x		A/I
Excellent written and verbal communication skills	x		A/I
A relentless focus on attention to detail in all aspects of the role			A/I
Resilience: Demonstrate resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges	x		I
Optimism: Demonstrate a Growth Mindset approach	x		I
Community: Hold a strong belief in the value of community and its role in creating a school where all feel welcome and included	x		I
Community: Value and celebrate diversity	x		I
Kindness: Lead with kindness and compassion.	x		I
Self-awareness: Commit to self-awareness and reflective practice	x		I