



South Hampstead

High School

G D S T

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in a role at South Hampstead High School. I realise every Head will say this about their school, but this is one of the friendliest and most energising environments you could hope to work in. We are supported by the Girls' Day School Trust, a family of 25 schools across England and Wales, with outstanding opportunities for professional development and a modern, fearless approach to everything we do. Our staff are central to our success and happiness, both teachers and support staff.

I joined South Hampstead in January 2017 and being its Head has been the most fulfilling period of my professional life. Curiosity, creativity, collaboration, and conversation lie at the heart of our community. We want our colleagues to feel empowered as well as supported and guided in their work. We are an efficient and well-run school but we do not breathe down colleagues' necks – we aim to hire great people and then give them the tools, training, guidance and autonomy to do a great job.

Pupils here work hard and they are ambitious for their futures, but you will not find yourself weighed down by endless questions about assessment objectives and syllabuses here. Learning here is about horizons rather than hoops. The abundance of discursive academic societies and journals is testament to their intellectual spark, as is the busy Library which sits at the heart of both our Junior and Senior Schools.

Our pupils come from diverse backgrounds with many different languages spoken and different religions celebrated at home (though we are a secular school). Our atmosphere is by its very nature inclusive, welcoming, and respectful of difference. We have an active pupil inclusion council who share their ideas and feedback with us. We have a proud tradition of offering free bursary places to students who could not otherwise afford to come here, and we have ambitious plans in this area. We have a well-established tradition of staff Pride Champions. We want you as an applicant to experience this inclusive culture, so please do let us know if there is anything that might affect the way in which we organise our selection process for you.

At GDST we are proudly single-sex schools. We know that on average girls are less confident than boys, and so many of our educational experiences are designed to foster confidence and risk-taking. Each girl takes part in some sort of public-speaking opportunity every year from 4-18 and debating is an ever-increasing strength of the school, with our active Debate Hub for local schools. Each pupil is encouraged to pursue their own interests, by setting up a new society, by reading a book their teacher recommends, by entering a competition, by giving a talk to their year group. The pupils at this school have a strong sense of self but tempered with a great sense of fun and humility.

Pupils do not take themselves too seriously at South Hampstead and that is true of the staff as well. Our House events occasionally border on the quirky, our Year 13 students perform the most hilarious satire on the school, even the Nativity Play has many excellent one-liners, and there is a genuine warmth that pervades the whole community. Looking after people is what we aim to do and staff go

Headmistress

Mrs Victoria Bingham
MA (Oxon)

Junior School

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above and beyond for the pupils and for each other. Our pupils talk readily to us and they trust us. This is because we recruit staff who are kind as well as clever.

Working life at South Hampstead is busy and buzzy, but we manage to get to the finish line of the end of term (mostly) still smiling. One of the things we are most proud of is how staff and we as a school responded to the challenges of the pandemic. Throughout this period colleagues were adaptable, agile, thoughtful and creative (these are actually the words of a parent, but I would have chosen the same ones). This was not by chance but because these are the adjectives with which I would describe our staff culture any day.

All the staff at South Hampstead are professionals with a huge sense of pride in what they do. We have an exceptional team of support staff who are as critical to our success and happiness as a school as our teachers. We have a good spread of experience across the school from a variety of different professional and cultural backgrounds. We have colleagues with more than a decade or two of service at the school, and colleagues who have joined more recently and enrich our community with their own experiences.

We provide sector-leading professional development through an impressive programme of free professional development, provided by the GDST. For those interested in promotion, there are often roles of additional responsibility to take on, such as School Consultant Teacher roles which enable colleagues to focus on an area of whole-school impact, perhaps for a time-bound period. There are also opportunities to work collaboratively across the GDST – indeed staff are encouraged to reach out beyond our walls to other schools, and we actively encourage staff to get involved in our partnerships programme with local (or indeed global) schools.

Staff wellbeing and workload are always at the forefront of our minds. We do our best to focus on what matters and we discard what does not. We try our hardest to notice all the brilliant things our staff do. We rarely send emails in the holidays or at weekends, but as with many things at South Hampstead, we operate on the basis of a mutually understood culture rather than on rigid rules.

I love this school from the bottom of my heart – its energy, its spark, its warmth – and I know how warmly my colleagues speak of it too. We all very much hope that you will want to join us. South Hampstead turns 150 in 2026-2027 and this is a golden period for the school. We hope you will want to join us on our exciting journey towards this milestone.

Please do get in touch with us if you would like to know more about our school. Our Head of HR, Carolyn Daniel, would be delighted to hear from you: c.daniel@shhs.gdst.net

With all good wishes,

Vicky Bingham and All the Staff at South Hampstead High School

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