



GEORGE
WATSON'S
—COLLEGE—

HEAD OF SENIOR SCHOOL CANDIDATE PACK

SEPTEMBER 2025

OUR PURPOSE IS TO BE THE
MAKING OF EVERY CHILD



HEAD OF SENIOR SCHOOL

George Watson's College invites applications for Head of Senior School to lead a vibrant, inclusive and successful day school community of c.1500 pupils (aged 11-18). This is a permanent appointment; the post is currently held on an interim basis (following the permanent secondment of the previous postholder to Erskine Stewart's Melville).

The Head of Senior School reports to the Principal of George Watson's College and has both considerable autonomy over the operation of the Senior School and a key role in the strategy and leadership of the School as a whole.



LISA KERR
GEORGE WATSON'S COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

OUR SCHOOL



George Watson's College is one of the largest independent schools in the United Kingdom. A total of over 2,300 pupils (from ages 3 to 18) are educated on a superb 50 acre campus in South West Edinburgh. Children flourish in a fully co-educational environment where achievement, enrichment and belonging underpin the school's purpose of being 'the making of every child'.

The School is one of the schools of the Royal Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh and is governed by the Merchant Company Education Board. It is a member of HMC and SCIS.

Despite its size, Watson's enjoys a reputation of having a small school feel due to the close and friendly relationships between all members of the School community. The School's motto *Ex Corde Caritas* (Love from the Heart) is central to its values: Aim High, Join In, Respect All, Be Kind.

Because of its size, Watson's offers an outstanding range within the examined syllabus, where pupils study for SQA qualifications.

The School welcomes children with all talents and has an inclusive admissions policy.

High academic standards see results significantly above national average across N5, Higher and Advanced Higher; all pupils achieve N5 English and 2025 saw 27 of GWC pupils achieve the highest mark in Scotland across 15 subjects/levels.

The School also offers National Progression Awards, Skills for Work qualifications and the SCQF level 5 Mental Health and Wellbeing qualification that all pupils in S2-4 work towards.

Watson's pupils go on to study at top universities across the UK and internationally.





Central to the School's approach is the plethora of extra-curricular activities, which includes nearly 200 activities in sport, music, drama, outdoor education, technology and other super-curricular activities. The school has very high levels of participation in activities beyond the classroom and an enviable number of national individual and team champions.

Outdoor and adventure education is embedded within the school, with the legendary S3 Projects transforming lives to this day and high numbers of pupils achieving Gold DofE.

Watson's delivers significant positive social impact through local partnerships and projects. This includes working with the Edinburgh Food Project, an HIV education project with Castlebrae Community Campus and The University of Edinburgh; raising >£300k as part of the Engineering and Computer Science in Schools (ECSES) project to establish a computing curriculum at Castlebrae and Leith Primary; and the Swire Chinese Language Centre Edinburgh - a £2.6m 10-year project which has educated 10,000 pupils from 44 schools.



LOOKING AHEAD



The new Head of Senior School will be joining George Watson's College at a very exciting time in its long history. Principal, Lisa Kerr, joined the school in August 2024 and, with Governing Council and WLT, has just launched the school's new five-year strategy to ensure that a thriving Watson's is the making of every child. Underpinning its commitment to achievement, enrichment and belonging is a recognition that the School must be ambitious, agile and sustainable.

Parents are being supported with the introduction of a three-year fee affordability strategy, the School has a strong and stable staff body, and pupils are enjoying recent developments including the opening of a new Learning Hub and a new strength and conditioning suite (within an already impressive Centre for Sport). A planning permission application has just been made for two new all-weather sports pitches as part of Watson's' commitment to invest in facilities which benefit its pupils and the local community, and which support income generation.

The School is well placed to navigate the market disruptions of VAT imposition, and has a clear plan to ensure a successful future.

THE POST

This represents an excellent opportunity for a school leader with the vision, drive and ambition to make a significant contribution to one of the UK's leading schools.

The Head of Senior School is a key member of the Watson's Leadership Team (WLT) which also includes the Principal, Head of Junior School, Bursar, Chief Operating Officer, two Deputy Heads from each of the Senior and Junior Schools, Director of Development, Director of External Affairs, Head of HR, Head of Estates and Head of IT.

WLT is responsible to the Governing Council through the Principal for the overall operational management and strategic direction of George Watson's College.

Whilst the successful candidate will have a record of highly successful teaching in an appropriate context, there is no expectation that the Head of Senior School will have a teaching timetable.

An attractive and competitive salary package will be available for the right candidate.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The person appointed will:

- be a trained and qualified graduate senior school teacher, registered with (or eligible for registration with) the General Teaching Council for Scotland;
- bring experience of successful leadership;
- be ambitious for the School and its pupils;
- be a creative thinker and a collaborative colleague;
- be a compassionate leader who will support staff during a period of significant sectoral uncertainty, whilst inspiring them to continue to deliver outstanding pupil outcomes and experiences;
- be committed to the ethos, heritage and traditions of Watson's;
- have excellent interpersonal and communication skills and be able to work with colleagues across all of GWC as well as partners in the statutory authorities and from the wider community;
- have the strong organisational skills necessary to lead a large, successful and high profile school.

JOB SPECIFICATION



General Responsibilities

The Head of Senior School is accountable to the Principal for the leadership and routine operation of the Senior School including, but not limited to:

- All matters relating to pupils in the Senior School including their safety, wellbeing attainment, achievement, enrichment and behaviour;
- The admission of pupils into the Senior School and retention of current pupils, in line with admissions targets;
- All matters relating to Senior School staff including their recruitment, induction, professional development, performance and wellbeing;
- All Senior School expenditure, ensuring that the School's financial policies and procedures are observed;
- Ensuring that the School's policies and procedures are observed in respect of all aspects of the operation of the Senior School;
- Ensuring the Senior School's compliance with all relevant legislation and regulation.

Specific Responsibilities

The Head of Senior School shall also:

- Deputise for the Principal in her absence as required;
- Act as one of the Deputy Child Protection (CP) Co-ordinators in respect of the Senior School, and support the CP Co-ordinator;
- Act as the "Named Person" as provided in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 in respect of Senior School Pupils;
- In line with the overall strategic plan, devise and lead the implementation of the Senior School priorities;
- Attend Meetings of Governing Council and such of its committees as may be required, including the Governing Council Education & Safeguarding Committee;
- Be an active and collaborative member of WLT;
- Convene and attend such internal and external meetings and events as are necessary for the successful operation of the Senior School.



NEXT STEPS

To apply, please send a covering letter of not more than 2 sides of A4, addressed to Lisa Kerr, Principal to vacancies@gwc.org.uk by midnight on Thursday 18 September, along with a CV summarising posts and qualifications held.

Shortlisting will take place on 23 September with candidates notified as soon as possible thereafter.

Shortlisted candidates will first meet online with the Chair of Education and Safeguarding Committee between 29 September and 1 October and in-person interviews will take place at George Watson's College, Edinburgh on 2 October 2025.





WE DO EVERYTHING SO
THEY'RE READY FOR
ANYTHING