

COGNITA

# DOWNSEND SCHOOL

Candidate Brief for the appointment  
of **Head of Junior School** at



DOWNSEND  
SCHOOL

*Inspiring Young Minds*

# Discover purpose, create change


Welcome, and thank you for considering us. You're about to embark on a journey that could shape not only your career but the future of education.

At Cognita, we believe in the power of individuals to create a lasting impact. Joining us means being part of a community where your ideas, passion, and drive can truly make a difference.

This candidate pack is your guide to discovering how you can thrive with us.

## Inside this pack you'll discover:

- **About Cognita** – learn about what fuels us and keeps us moving forward.
- **Our people promise** – learn about the role you'll play and the impact you'll make with us.
- **School introduction** – learn about the great school you'll join.
- **Role overview** – understand how we see you contributing and explore what's expected of you.
- **Benefits** – discover the rewards of becoming part of Cognita.
- **Application process** – find out what's next and how to apply.

 **We're excited to see how you'll help shape the future at Cognita. Good luck with your application – we can't wait to see what you'll bring.**



# THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT






About Cognita

# A world of schools connected by a single purpose

At Cognita, we don't just provide education – we create environments where students, teachers, and colleagues can truly thrive. As part of our global family, you'll join a unique community that's dedicated to shaping the future of education. Our purpose is simple yet powerful: to empower every individual to **thrive in a rapidly evolving world.**


 Want to understand the thread that connects our schools? See our Quality Framework on the next page.

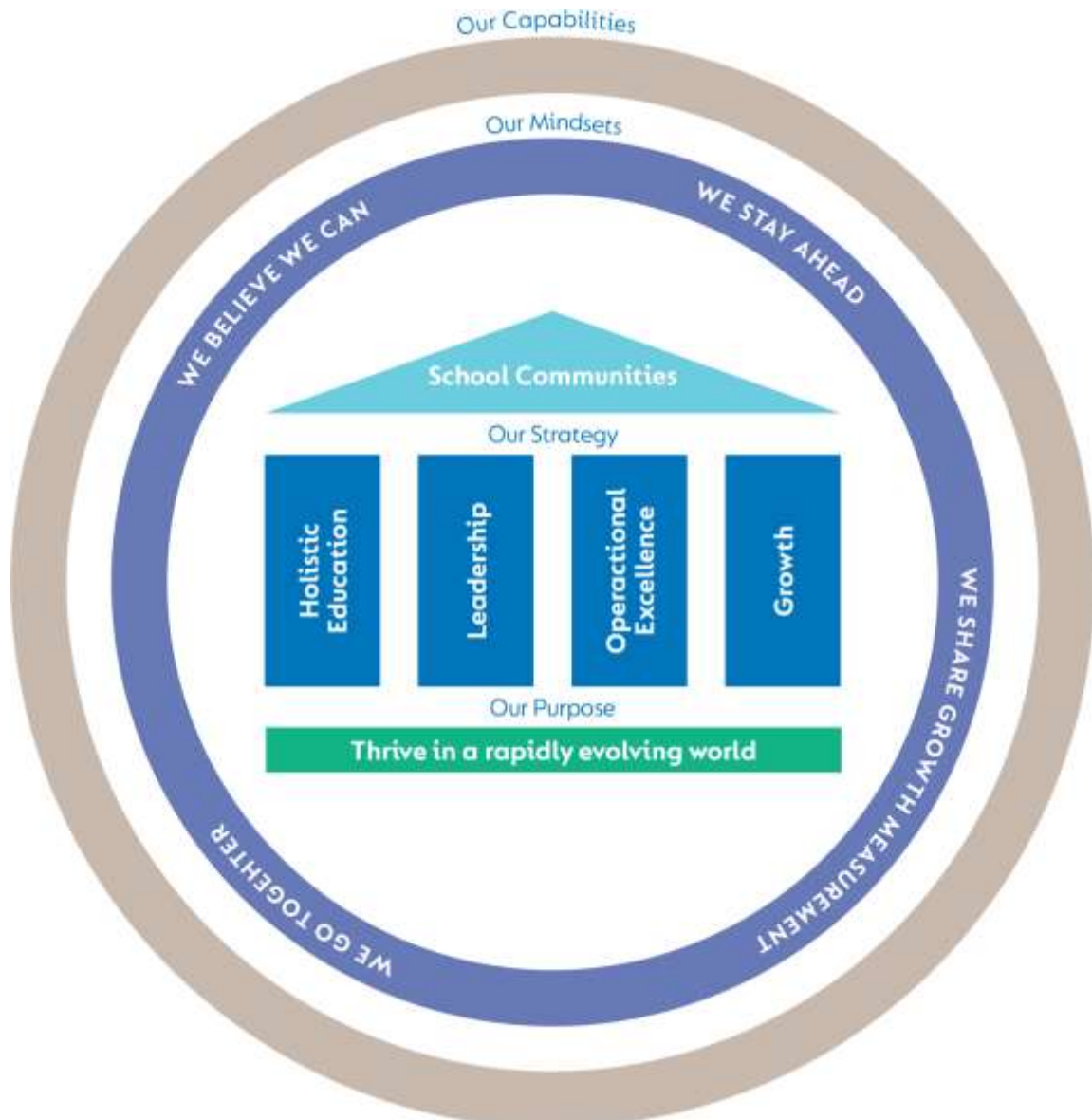
# Our Quality Framework

With the support of our Cognita Quality Framework, we ensure that every school maintains its unique identity while benefiting from shared best practices, knowledge, and a global commitment to excellence.

This framework is the golden thread that connects all our schools, helping us create world-class learning environments for everyone.

Every Cognita school is special to us, but we are united by our collective goals, passion for innovation, and commitment to progress. Together, we collaborate, embrace new challenges, and create meaningful change that benefits not only our schools but the communities around us.

 **Keep reading to understand the mindsets that empower us to thrive and brings this all this to life.**



# Building a strong culture for an evolving world

For our extraordinary community to fulfil our purpose, we rely on the strength of our culture. We thrive and our students thrive when we go forward together, progress by facing challenge, anticipate the future, and stay open to new ideas and ways of working.

## Our Mindsets

Building a thriving culture isn't accidental – it's the result of intentional choices and actions we take every day. By living through our mindsets, we don't just shape the way we work – we build a culture that empowers us to drive purpose and create change so we can grow, succeed and make a lasting impact.

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### We go together

We are stronger together, as one global schools system and operate with our collective goals in mind. We show up for one another, collaborate widely and share generously.

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### We believe we can

We are driven and passionate about what we do. Determined learners, we progress fast by facing challenges and empowering others to do the same. We take ownership of our responsibilities and always believe there is a way.

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### We stay ahead

We embrace change to stay ahead, whilst maintaining high-standards and best practice. We anticipate the future, not afraid to do things differently so that both our students and our business thrive today and tomorrow.

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### We share a growth mindset

We always consider the needs and perspectives of others. We are open to new ideas and ways of working, connecting to wider perspectives wherever possible.

 **Want to better understand the role you'll play and the impact you'll make with us? Have a look at the next page.**

Our promise to you

# Discover purpose, create change with us

We are a diverse community, united by a shared purpose: to **thrive in a rapidly evolving world.**


We empower every school, teacher, colleague and student to focus on what they do best.

As a dynamic, committed team in 100 schools in 16 countries, we move fast but securely and progress while maintaining high standards. Find diversity, autonomy, and challenge to build a purposeful career with a variety of opportunities both upwards and sideways.

Join a welcoming, supportive network of talented people who are resilient and driven to achieve. Embrace change and innovate thoughtfully, take in fresh perspectives to achieve ambitious goals and create an inclusive, sustainable future in education. Striving for excellence and encouraging one another, make your mark through intentional impact and creating meaningful change for children and our incredible school system.

Your voice matters in our collaborative, open environment. We show up for one another, care about everyone's well-being and value input from our whole school community. Our strength lies in our diverse and expansive collaboration, championing local ownership and creating opportunities through our differences.

Achieve more in a place that thinks ahead, is unafraid to do things differently, and welcomes new ideas. Create change, grow, care, and always find purpose in a place committed to helping you and everyone thrive.

 **Find out what this means for your role on the following pages...**

**Where you'll  
make an impact**





# Be the catalyst for educational transformation

Step into a transformative leadership role at Cognita, where your vision and drive will shape the future of our schools. Every action you take has a clear purpose: to inspire both staff and students to achieve their fullest potential.

In this role, you will foster innovation, collaboration, and inclusion, creating a lasting impact and championing a shared mission of educational excellence.

## Discover purpose and create change with us:

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### Thrive in an extraordinary community

In our global community, collaboration and shared goals are central. You'll be part of a passionate network that supports and inspires each other. Together, we achieve more than we ever could alone, sharing generously and collaborating widely.

### Create meaningful change every day

Lead with a bold purpose and inspire transformative educational environments. At Cognita, you'll drive initiatives that promote inclusivity and diversity, making a profound difference in the lives of our students and staff. Your leadership will leave a legacy of progress and excellence.

### Champion progress in education

We stay ahead by embracing and role-modelling change, pushing the boundaries of what's possible in education. Your forward-thinking approach will set new standards for innovation, ensuring that our schools continue to thrive today and tomorrow.

### Learn and develop from new challenges

At Cognita, we embrace challenges with determination and optimism. In your role, you'll continually develop new skills and take ownership of your growth, while empowering others to do the same.

 Find out more about Downsend School on the next page...





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# Discover purpose, create change at Downsend School

### Welcome to our school

Founded in 1898, Downsend has a rich history of delivering a truly holistic education and has always thrived on pushing the boundaries in every area of school life. There is an energy and a sense of purpose when you join Downsend, this is a school that works at a fast pace, has high expectations and is not afraid to do things differently. This leads to a sense of camaraderie and a shared purpose among staff that makes Downsend such a unique place to be. Located across four sites in Ashted, Epsom and Leatherhead, and with a pupil roll of 815 students from the ages of 6 months to 16 years, Downsend proudly plays an important part in the local community.

With further change on the horizon, with a launch of a Sixth Form in September 2025, Downsend has an exciting future ahead.

### Our vision

Academic excellence and achieving the very best for every child is at the heart of what we do, whilst never at the expense of providing and creating opportunities in all aspects of their lives. The pandemic was instrumental in shaping Downsend's 'Future Skills' vision and aims. Whilst informed by a deep body of research, it was also built on collective experiences gained during a time of rapid change and the very obvious need to equip our young people with more than just excellent academic outcomes, but to also ensure they understand their place in the world, both globally and locally, and how to be the kind of people that contribute to society meaningfully.

Our vision helps shape our priorities from Little Downsend through to the Senior School and has been instrumental in building a collective purpose amongst staff, from our Sustainability strategy recognised by Eco-Schools and the RHS, achieving the UNICEF Rights Respecting accreditation, achieving Microsoft Showcase status and delivering innovative curriculum collapse events, trips, clubs and experiences for pupils day in and day out.

September 2025 will mark a truly momentous milestone in our history as Downsend Sixth is launched following a £5m investment. Downsend will then become the only 0–18 provider of independent education in the local area.

This is a remarkable time to join a remarkable school.

**What you'll  
bring to  
our story**

# What you'll be doing

## Role purpose

The Head of Junior School is responsible to the Executive Headteacher for all matters relating to the education of Junior School pupils, together with the welfare and professional development of its staff.

The post holder will assist the Executive Headteacher in leading a school which is entirely compliant and provides a safe learning environment; and providing inspirational leadership which ensures continuing improvement with a focus on delivering Teaching Excellence to accelerate and sustain excellent pupil progress and realise the Cognita commitment of, 'Enriching the lives of children to achieve more than they believe they can'.

## Leadership

- Assist the Executive Headteacher in creating and communicating a clear sense of purpose and direction which is understood by all stakeholders
- Embed the vision and direction for the school with the Executive Headteacher and wider school leadership team
- Create a positive and growth-minded culture to develop a conducive environment where staff love coming to work and students have an inspiring environment to learn in.
- Support the Executive Headteacher in effectively communicating all aspects of the school to its community
- Develop and maintain a culture which embeds safeguarding as part of the life of the school for every student

## Holistic education

- Ensure clarity of focus on safeguarding, academic achievement and personal development.
- Together with the Executive Headteacher and SLT, embed the Cognita Quality Framework: A3– Attitudes, Adaptability and Agency.
- Maintain a safe, stimulating and responsive learning environment, providing opportunities for children to undertake an innovative and vibrant approach to school life
- Ensure a rigorous focus on pupils' achievement, using data and assessment tools to monitor pupil progress and challenge under-achievement with pupils and colleagues
- Be an advocate for student wellbeing and ensure the Cognita Be Well Charter is used as a key tool in student wellbeing.

## Operational excellence

- Oversee school infrastructure and resources in a commercially appropriate way.
- Knowledge of the company procedures, deadlines and limits of authority, and ensure the school adheres to them.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteer roles are clearly defined, understood and agreed; and that individuals are held to account.



## Role overview > What you'll be doing

### Growth

- Support the Executive Headteacher in the management of the Student Retention and Admissions experience
- Ensure partnerships with parents to support and improve pupil achievement and wellbeing.
- Create partnerships within the local community to maintain the School's reputation.

### People

- Recruit, retain and develop staff as leaders in order to build capacity.
- Ensure high engagement of staff
- Be willing to tackle difficult issues

### Safeguarding and compliance

- Demonstrate a personal commitment to safeguarding, health & safety.
- Lead the school so that it is compliant and provides a safe learning environment for students and colleagues.
- Ensure full compliance with legislation, regulations, safeguarding policies, procedures and code of conduct.
- Take on the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), ensuring the effective implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures, acting as the main point of contact for child protection concerns, liaising with external agencies, providing staff with safeguarding training and guidance, and promoting a safe, inclusive environment for all learners.

### Governance

- Governance Cognita is the proprietor of Downsend School. As such, Cognita has the legal responsibility and accountability for ensuring that the School is compliant, demonstrating the highest standard of pupil safety, quality of education and effectiveness in all areas of school life.
- Cognita schools do not have governing bodies. However, they all have strong and established governance arrangements and Heads are line managed by a Chair of Governors.
- Lead a school which is entirely compliant and provides a safe learning environment for students and staff ensuring full compliance with legislation, regulations, safeguarding policies, procedures and code of conduct.
- Safeguarding and Health & Safety governance visits are held at each school to evaluate their quality for protection for our children. During these visits, the reviewer will speak with the Head, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Educational Visits Coordinator and other staff, as well as always talking to groups of children.

# What you'll bring

## Person specification

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### Persona

- A nice, personable and charismatic person who has professional gravitas (in and out of school)
  - Understand the importance of 'frontline leadership'
  - Embraces and manages diversity
  - Understands why and how to build capacity
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### Skills/attributes/traits

- Strong leadership skills with integrity and a strong moral compass
  - Has resilience but is willing to be open and learn
  - Enjoys empowering others and nurturing talent
  - Able and willing to have honest & tough conversations with colleagues and parents.
  - Ability to simplify the complex
  - Strong people skills with the ability to build teams and the school community
  - Excellent written and oral communication skills
  - Manage competing priorities and meeting deadlines
  - Able to develop and deliver strategic plans
  - Be adaptable in order to engage effectively with parents, pupils and colleagues
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### Experience & knowledge

- Demonstrate outstanding teaching practice
  - Good commercial acumen
  - Knowledge of safeguarding regulations and Independent Schools Standard & Regulations
  - Deep understanding of the curriculum
  - Experience leading KS1 & KS2
  - Quality Assurance practices to utilise the evaluation/action cycle to understand performance and drive the continuous improvement cycle
  - Experience of delivering strong commercial and financial performance (Desirable)
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### Qualifications

- Degree in Education
- Relevant Educational qualification / qualified teacher status
- Masters in Education and/or leadership (Desirable)

## Benefits

# The benefits that will help you thrive

Our benefits are more than just perks – they're a reflection of our commitment to your growth, well-being, and success. Whether you're looking to expand your professional horizons or ensure a healthy balance between work and life, we offer a range of benefits designed to support you every step of the way.

## What you'll get

### Core benefits

- Competitive salary based on level and experience
- Life assurance
- Pension scheme
- Flu vaccinations
- Employee assistance programme
- My StaffShop discounts
- Cycle to work scheme
- School fee discount



# Great, so what happens next?

## How to apply

We're excited to get to know you and learn more about your unique skills and experiences. To help us process your application smoothly, here are a few steps to guide you:

- Please submit a completed Cognita application form, along with a cover letter that highlights how your experience and skills align with the role. The cover letter should be no more than two sides of A4 and can be submitted in the specified languages.
- Feel free to include your CV, but please ensure it accompanies the completed application form.
- Submit your application via our applicant tracking system by following the apply now link on the advert. Be sure to submit it by the stated deadline so we can review your application as soon as possible.

We can't wait to meet you. Best of luck with your application, and we'll be in touch with the next steps soon.

## Safeguarding at Cognita

At Cognita Schools, we are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all staff, volunteers, and third parties to share this commitment. As part of our safer recruitment practices, pre-employment background checks will be conducted before any appointment is confirmed

## Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I)

At Cognita, diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. As a global community spanning over 94 nationalities, we know that our strength lies in our diversity. It's what drives our success and makes Cognita a place where everyone can thrive.

We are committed to:

- Attracting, recruiting, and retaining diverse talent
- Embedding DE&I principles into every part of school life
- Fostering inclusive environments where all voices are heard and celebrated

No matter where you come from or what stage of your career journey you're on, you're welcome at Cognita.

# Discover purpose, create change



Your journey towards making a real difference starts here and we're excited to see how you'll make your mark.

Contact us at [recruitment@cognita.com](mailto:recruitment@cognita.com) and begin your journey today.

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