Head of HR

St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

JANUARY 2027

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Welcome from the Head

Thank you for showing interest in this role at St Mary's School, Cambridge.

We are an independent day and boarding school for girls aged 3 to 18. We have a school roll of over 450 students. Approximately 10% of the students are boarders. Reflecting the cosmopolitan community of Cambridge, on average 20% of students originate from overseas, from around 25 countries.

The School offers a secure and welcoming learning environment for girls: we are delightfully situated in the heart of the academically renowned and culturally vibrant city of Cambridge. The Junior School is adjacent to the famous backdrop of Coe Fen, and the Senior School and Boarding House overlook the University of Cambridge Botanic Gardens.

Cambridge is an outstanding place to live and work. As a university city, Cambridge has the cultural advantages of a much larger settlement but with a population of approximately 145,000, it is a safe, clean and attractive location. The city has an international reputation owing to its world ranking university and the school benefits from its proximity to the digital and enterprise communities in the various high-tech science parks and enterprise hubs. We are within easy travelling distance of London, less than an hour by train and a short hop from London Stansted Airport.

There has been major investment in new facilities at the School over the past decade: a new Junior School; a new Sixth Form Centre; new provision of Art & Photography; the creation of our Science Hub; and our new boarding facility, Mary Ward House. We have developed our sporting facilities through an ambitious collaboration with Homerton College, University of Cambridge and have invested in a new boat house in a joint partnership with City of Cambridge Rowing Club and Homerton College. We are proud to have opened our Mary Ward Educational Suite in January 2024 which provides new state of the art teaching spaces.

High quality facilities are only as good as the people who work in them, so we invest heavily in our staff, who we know are our greatest asset. We encourage staff to develop themselves through training and facilitate bespoke CPD opportunities for all.

St Mary's School promotes equal opportunity for all staff and pupils and is committed to its culture of diversity and inclusion. We encourage applications from candidates from a wide range of backgrounds.

Above all, St Mary's School, Cambridge is a very happy place. We have an excellent local reputation for being very friendly and nurturing, and yet ambitious, for the young women in our care, enabling strong progress to next steps at university, the world of work or a gap year. Our girls are genuinely delightful, the teachers and support staff are exceptionally dedicated; we are a very close-knit, loving, joyful and purposeful community.

St Mary's really is a warm and welcoming environment for all staff, whatever their role, and we look forward to receiving your application.

Hannah Helliar

The St Mary's Approach

We are proud to be a Christian school in the Catholic tradition and founded on the principles of our 17th century foundress, Mary Ward, our vision is that 'By God's grace, women in time will do much' (Mary Ward 1585-1645). The challenge for women is not over, and whilst there are now more opportunities for 'women to do much' there are still considerable barriers and so our work continues via our mission to develop curious, creative and compassionate young women with the aspiration, confidence and integrity to shape a better world for the common good. Our approach is based on the core values of Freedom, Joy, Justice, Love and Truth and we live these values in school through our HEART habits of

H – Hard work	We show perseverance and sustain focus.
E – Empathy	We are kind, joyful, generous, value friendship and celebrate diversity.
A – Adaptability	We adjust to difficult situations, are open minded, discerning and take calculated risks.
R – Responsibility	We act justly and strive to uphold truth and lead by example.
T – Thoughtfulness	We are creative, reflective, attentive, show gratitude, hear others and disagree well.

Our unique approach to education fosters a love of life and of learning, while growing the academic curiosity and spiritual wellbeing of each individual girl so that they can look beyond themselves and enter adulthood aspiring to be more and to give more, not just to have more. We warmly welcome girls, and staff, of all Christian denominations and other faith and secular backgrounds to join our thriving community.

The school recently celebrated its 125th anniversary, and building on our 400-year tradition, St Mary's School, Cambridge belongs to an international network of approximately two hundred Mary Ward schools.

A Love for Learning at St Mary's

At our school, our values — freedom, joy, justice, love and truth — shape a respectful, inclusive and engaging learning environment where every student can be herself and achieve her best. We nurture curiosity, ambition and a genuine love of learning, inspiring students to pursue academic excellence with confidence and purpose.

Through expert teaching, a challenging curriculum and personalised support, we empower each pupil to embrace opportunities, overcome challenges and fulfil her potential. Our commitment is not only to outstanding results, but also to developing independent, reflective and critical thinkers who are ready to thrive at university and beyond with adaptability, creativity and determination.

As a learning community, we are proud to be continuously refining and enhancing our practice, and we welcome applications from colleagues who share our ambition, curiosity and dedication to high-quality, research-informed teaching.

Digital St Mary's

St Mary's is a digital school. The goals of the School are supported through

- developing a community of staff and students which learns in, responds to and engages with an ever-changing digital world;
- preparing students for their future by giving them the confidence to work in a digital environment;
- establishing creative teaching and learning environments;
- employing teaching staff who are trained and supported to be technologically and digitally skilled.

All members of St Mary's work digitally using Microsoft 365 as a platform. All students in the Senior School and Sixth Form have access to an individual device (Microsoft Surface Pro) which are used extensively in lessons and for home learning.

Job Description: Head of HR

Reporting to:	Head of HR
Hours of Work:	Full time, 40 hours a week
Salary:	£44,000 - £48,000 (depending on experience)
Start Date:	January 2027
Accountable to:	The Bursar or other nominated person

Job purpose

To lead the School's human resources and related compliance functions, providing practical, professional advice and support to leaders and staff. The postholder will help the School recruit, retain and develop a skilled workforce, while ensuring that employment and related compliance processes are fair, consistent, confidential and aligned with the School's Catholic ethos and commitment to the wellbeing of every student and member of staff.

The postholder will support St Mary's all-through provision for girls aged 3–18 and its strategic priorities, including sustaining a strong staff culture and supporting the School's work to strengthen pupil recruitment and communicate its distinctive identity.

Key responsibilities

1. HR leadership and advice

- Lead the day-to-day HR function and advise the Head, Bursar and senior leaders on staffing and employment matters.
- Provide clear, timely advice on policies, procedures and employment practice, seeking specialist HR or legal advice where appropriate.
- Develop, review and maintain HR policies and procedures, ensuring that they are clear, accessible and applied consistently.
- Maintain accurate, confidential and secure staff records, and ensure HR information is handled appropriately.
- Prepare workforce reports to support planning and decision-making, including information on staffing levels, vacancies, absence, turnover and recruitment.
- Support leaders with workforce planning and the practical management of staffing matters.

2. Recruitment and safer recruitment

- Oversee recruitment from vacancy approval to appointment, including advertising, shortlisting, interviews, references and employment checks.
- Ensure recruitment is fair, inclusive and consistent with the School's commitment to safeguarding and promoting students' welfare.
- Coordinate pre-employment checks and maintain complete and accurate recruitment records in line with current requirements.
- Support recruiting managers to prepare clear role descriptions and person specifications that reflect the School's needs and values.
- Help present St Mary's as an attractive employer, supporting recruitment and retention across a diverse, all-through school.
- Ensure relevant staff receive appropriate training for their safer recruitment responsibilities.

3. Employee relations and casework

- Advise managers on capability, conduct, grievance, disciplinary, absence and performance matters.
- Support managers to handle sensitive cases promptly, fairly and confidentially, following School procedures and seeking external advice where needed.
- Attend meetings and hearings as an HR adviser, take accurate notes and ensure records and outcomes are properly documented.

- Support the resolution of workplace concerns and promote respectful working relationships.

4. Staff wellbeing, development and retention

- Work with leaders to support staff wellbeing, attendance and a positive working environment.
- Coordinate induction and ensure new staff understand the School's expectations, culture and procedures.
- Support performance review, professional development and workforce planning processes.
- Identify patterns in recruitment, absence and staff turnover, and work with leaders on practical responses.
- Promote a culture in which staff feel valued, listened to and able to contribute to the School community.

5. Safeguarding and employment compliance

- Work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and relevant leaders on safeguarding-related employment processes, including the management and recording of concerns about adults in line with School procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality while ensuring safeguarding or other serious concerns are passed promptly to the appropriate senior leader.
- Support compliance with safer recruitment requirements and ensure recruitment records and checks are complete and accurate.
- Keep up to date with employment requirements and statutory guidance affecting schools.
- Monitor compliance practises and records, identify gaps and work with relevant staff to support consistent implementation.

6. Manage the HR Administrator, including setting priorities, allocating work, providing guidance and support, and carrying out regular performance reviews and appraisals.

7. Liaise with the relevant school colleagues to ensure that appointments, leavers, contractual changes, absence, pay awards and other payroll information are accurate, authorised and submitted in time for each payroll deadline. Resolve discrepancies promptly and maintain appropriate records.

8. Oversee and continually improve HR processes and systems. Identify opportunities to streamline workflows and improve the service provided to staff and leaders. Review informal or undocumented custom and practice, and replace it with clear, approved and accessible procedures, templates and records.

9. Maintain oversight of staff training records, ensuring that completion is recorded, monitored and reported. Work with relevant colleagues to support compliance with mandatory training requirements, including safeguarding, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and health and safety. Escalate overdue training to the appropriate leader.

10. Maintain and manage the Single Central Record (SCR) in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures and applicable requirements. Ensure entries are accurate, complete, up to date and supported by the appropriate evidence; coordinate regular checks and promptly address any gaps with the relevant colleagues.

11. Undertake training and professional development as required to maintain and develop the knowledge and skills needed for the role.

12. Undertake other duties reasonably required by the Bursar, consistent with the responsibilities and level of the post.

Person specification

Essential

- Significant experience in a generalist HR role, including employee relations and recruitment.
- Knowledge of good employment practice and the ability to interpret policies and guidance accurately.
- Experience advising managers on sensitive or complex staff matters.
- Strong organisation and record-keeping skills, with excellent attention to detail.
- Clear written and verbal communication skills, and the ability to handle confidential information sensitively.
- Ability to build trusted working relationships with staff at all levels.
- Commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.
- A professional approach reflecting the School's values of integrity, justice, hard work and respect for the individual.

Desirable

- Experience working in a school or another organisation responsible for the welfare of children.
- A recognised HR qualification or equivalent relevant experience.
- Experience of HR information systems, workforce reporting and staff wellbeing initiatives.
- Relevant safer recruitment training, or willingness to complete it.

Safeguarding statement

St Mary's School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. All appointments are subject to the required pre-employment checks and safeguarding procedures. The postholder is expected to uphold the School's safeguarding policies and act promptly on any concerns in accordance with School procedures.

Benefits

At St Mary's you will enjoy an exceptional career and comprehensive benefits including a defined contribution workplace pension scheme offered through APTIS (Aviva Pensions Trust for Independent Schools) at a flexible employer contribution level up to 22%, BUPA cash plan, 33% discount (pro rata for part-time staff) on school fees, a work laptop, an occupational sickness scheme, free lunches and refreshments, a rail season ticket discount, access to the Cambridge University Botanic Gardens and much more.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

St Mary's School is committed to ensuring equal opportunities in all aspects of employment and selects staff on merit irrespective of race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marital status, sex, sexuality/gender preference, disability or age. You are not obliged to complete the Equal Opportunities Form, but any information given will help us monitor the effectiveness of our policies and procedures.

If you have a disability, you are invited to request any special arrangements that you may require for interview or any adjustments that you would consider necessary to your working arrangements by contacting our Human Resources department (hr@stmaryscambridge.co.uk, 01223 353253).

Process

Application is welcomed by completing the Application Form and Equal Opportunities Form which can be found on the Vacancies page of our website. This may be accompanied by a covering letter and a curriculum vitae. We are unable to accept applications supported by a CV alone.

Interviews will be conducted in person, and they will explore candidates' suitability to work with children. Candidates are required to bring with them the necessary ID documentation and any relevant qualification certificate(s), all of which must be originals. Further information of the interview format will be provided if you are shortlisted for interview.

If you have any question, please contact the HR Team by email: hr@stmaryscambridge.co.uk or call: 01223 353253.

Closing date: 8.00am Friday 20 November 2026

Interview date: Thursday 26 November 2026

We will review applications on receipt. Suitable candidates may be interviewed before the closing date, and we reserve the right to withdraw the position if an early appointment is made.

Child Welfare and Child Protection Issues

The interview for this post will include exploring issues relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children including:

- motivation to work with children and young people;
- ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships with children and young people;
- emotional resilience in working with challenging behaviours;
- attitudes to the use of authority and maintaining discipline.

Any relevant issues arising from the take up of references will be discussed at interview. The school is an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Successful applicants are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Check.

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