



January 2019

Dear Applicant

Thank you for your interest in the post of Head of School of Dane Court Grammar School. This is a really important job – not just for the school, but also for Coastal Academies Trust (CAT). It is also an excellent opportunity for anyone who wants a direct, but supported route into headship. In order to help you to decide whether or not to apply, I want to set out what the school is like and needs, what we believe in and something about the context of Thanet.

Dane Court is a mixed selective school of about 1,200 students. In the context of Thanet (Broadstairs, Ramsgate and Margate) it is the most popular grammar school, each year filled with first choice students who have passed the Kent Test – the 11 Plus – and it is a pleasant school in which to work and to learn. In the context of the UK, Dane Court is more like a mixed comprehensive, with a range of academic ability and social and economic backgrounds that would surprise those who believe selective education is only for the middle classes.

Dane Court is a Teaching School, part of the East Kent Learning Alliance (EKLA), with two other Teaching schools and a number of strategic partner schools, as well as being a National Support School.

The school is Ofsted ‘outstanding’ – since its last inspection in 2007. Obviously, we are long overdue an inspection and expect one any time. When we are re-inspected, given the current Ofsted framework, we are likely to be found to be ‘good’. This is because we still have too many students who underperform, given their starting points and, whilst teaching is seldom worse than good, not enough of our lessons are consistently outstanding. There is a lot of excellent practice in the school, but still too many inconsistencies – and so one of our key challenges is to make sure that every student makes excellent progress, irrespective of the subject or teacher they have – and irrespective of the challenges facing that student at home and in the community.

The school is an IB World School and has been now for ten years. We only offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBDP) and the International Baccalaureate Careers – related Programme (IBCP) in the Sixth Form – because these are the best post 16 educational offers in the world. In many schools across the world, these programmes are only available to the children of parents who can afford a private education and we are immensely proud that we provide this as of right to our students as a part of their free state education. More than this, Dane Court has become the champion of the IB in the south of England and all CAT secondary schools now offer the IBCP and, supported by Dane Court, 29 schools in Kent offer the IBCP – by far the highest concentration in the world. IB programmes start with the Learner Profile, the qualities that we are seeking to develop in our students – rather than only obsessing with results. The IB philosophy places the curriculum at the centre of our

thinking, rather than outcomes, and so is very much in tune with the new direction that Amanda Spielman wants to take Ofsted in – a focus on the purpose of education, rather than only measuring a school by its results. So I hope you will find Dane Court an open, tolerant and compassionate community, ambitious and utterly determined to use education to transform both the lives of our students and the economic and social fortunes of our deprived community – and committed to working in collaboration with local schools, as well as those in Kent, the UK and across the world.

That commitment also lies at the heart of Coastal Academies Trust. The Trust began as a federation between two schools, Dane Court and King Ethelbert School – when Dane Court, as a successful grammar school, went into partnership with a challenging non selective school ten years ago at the height of Ed Balls’ National Challenge. King Ethelbert School is now the strongest secondary school in the Trust – and in the area. Since then, we have been joined by Cliftonville Primary School, an extraordinary, now outstanding, very large primary school serving the most deprived parts of Margate; Hartsdown Academy, an extremely challenging non selective secondary serving Margate – and Royal Harbour Academy, an equally challenging school serving Ramsgate and an associate member of the Trust, pending academisation. Hartsdown is currently RI with good leadership and Royal Harbour is inadequate – with serious weaknesses, rather than special measures. Both judgements are, in my opinion, the ridiculous outcomes of an idiotic Ofsted framework that has punished schools in poor areas with low attainment on entry and, therefore, with very low Progress 8 scores. Both schools are extraordinary and do a remarkable job in hugely adverse circumstances – although, of course, both schools and indeed all our schools, have much still to improve.

As a Trust our commitment to all our schools is non - negotiable. The children who attend the most challenging schools are just as important and valuable as those that attend the Ofsted outstanding schools. Therefore we believe absolutely that we have a collective responsibility for all the students in the Trust – and this is a legal responsibility that cannot be avoided when the going gets tough. And it is tough! Compared to many other multi academy trusts, we are relatively healthy financially – but we are still enormously constrained by a lack of money, as are state schools across the country.

Thanet used to be known as ‘Planet Thanet’ – regarded by much of the UK as an outlying and completely bonkers deprived part of the country, best ignored or forgotten. We are determined not to be ignored and so we tend to use every opportunity we have to fight back, hopefully constructively, to put Thanet back on the map and to make our children proud of their heritage. We believe in courageous leadership, because it takes courage to fight for what you believe in – which is that Thanet children should have as much entitlement to culture and wealth as any other child in the UK.

As Head of School in Dane Court Grammar School, you will need to focus relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school. However, you will also be an integral part of a team of Heads, sharing practice and sharing challenge to improve all our schools, standing shoulder to shoulder to deal with the pressures and to maintain a bloody

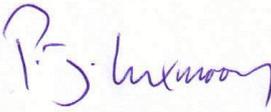
mindful, stubborn resilience, with the courage to innovate and take risks in order to provide the best that is possible for our students.

To help you in this, you will have probably the best asset in Kent – Kate Greig, since September the Executive Head of both Dane Court and King Ethelbert School. Kate is one of the most experienced and successful Heads in the UK, having transformed King Ethelbert School over the last ten years. She is the Chair of the Thanet Heads, as well as the Kent IBCP Heads, a co-opted member of IBSCA (International Baccalaureate Schools and Colleges Association) and a key trainer in the NPQSL and NPQH programmes, as well as a Kent Leader of Education. You will find Kate instantly easy to get on with, entirely passionate, but with a determination to have fun whenever possible. However, she knows what makes a school successful and what a school leader needs to do in order to improve a school. She also has an iron will and a commitment to the cause from which she will not retreat when the odds seem stacked against us. She has, for example, been at the centre of the stand we have taken against the Department of Education and government ministers about allowing looked after children to be sent to Thanet from other parts of the UK. This has at times been somewhat eye watering – but it is something that we believe in as a matter of professional integrity. You will also have the support of the other Heads, all experienced, all committed and all used to working as a team to support each other.

As a Head of School, you will be responsible for the day to day running of Dane Court, but supported and mentored by Kate – and indeed by me. This is an ideal job for either an ambitious assistant head, or a deputy head who wants a supported route into headship, but in the context of a multi academy trust. You need to be committed to working as a part of a team and sharing collective responsibility for all the schools in the Trust. If you secretly yearn for an elite and isolated life in a nice, safe grammar school, then this is not the job for you! If you want to be fully engaged in creating the future state education system, at the cutting edge of challenge, curriculum development and educational purpose – then apply. In the meanwhile, please feel very free to visit us, see the school and meet the people, including Kate and me. Come and see if we are what we say in this letter. Either phone Carolyn Hobbs on 01843 864941 to arrange a visit, or email Kate directly on Greig@danecourt.kent.sch.uk.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours faithfully



Paul Luxmoore
Executive Headteacher, Coastal Academies Trust