

ST MARY'S SCHOOL ASCOT

Job Description, Person Specification and Application Details – Finance Manager



St Mary's School Ascot is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

1. **Title.** Finance Manager.
2. **Location.** St Mary's School Ascot, St Mary's Road, Ascot, SL5 9JF.
3. **Background.**

St Mary's is a leading Roman Catholic girls' boarding school set in 55 acres of beautiful grounds in the heart of Berkshire. We are a friendly, stable and caring community, proud of our academic and co-curricular achievements and dedicated to realising the full potential of every one of our 390 pupils. We are committed to full boarding, with spaces for a few day pupils who live nearby. Please see Annex A and the school's website for further information about the school.

The Headmistress is a member of HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference), the GSA (Girls' Schools Association), CISC (Catholic Independent Schools' Conference) and the BSA (Boarding Schools' Association).

The school benefits from a wide variety of purpose-built accommodation constructed over the last 115 years under the leadership of the resident order of nuns (Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary) and latterly a lay Board of Governors. The main building, initially constructed in 1885, has been added to over the years with a variety of wings built to varying standard and quality. The main building is principally used for classroom accommodation, dining facilities and offices. Pupil accommodation is provided upstairs.

Surrounding the main building there are a number of stand-alone faculties including the Art, Music and Science Departments. The school is constantly investing in the site ensuring existing facilities are of a high standard and that new modern facilities are available to the pupils. Recently the school has invested in an Upper Sixth accommodation unit with 64 en-suite bedrooms, the Rose Theatre - a performing arts centre, the conversion of an old school hall into a senior library, construction of a 400m athletics track with a floodlit artificial hockey pitch and extended the pupil dining room.

During the school holidays the site remains a busy environment with community groups and others making full use of the school. This includes residential language schools during the summer and Easter holidays.

St Mary's School Ascot is a registered Charity (No. 290286). The Charity is constituted as a company limited by guarantee, incorporated in 1984 and it is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. There is a wholly owned subsidiary company called the St Mary's Ascot Trading Company (No. 1844327). The Board of Governors (Trustees of the Charity under Charity Law and Directors of the Charity under Company Law) are responsible for the strategic leadership, management and administration of the school. They delegate the day to day running of the school to the Headmistress. The Headmistress chairs the Senior Management and Education Team which includes the Senior, Pastoral and Academic Deputy Headmistresses and the Bursar. The latter also acts as Clerk to the Governors. The Finance Manager is also required to support the Bursar with

managing the school's relationship with the St Mary's School Ascot Charitable Fund, a separate charity (No. 800450) established to provide funding for scholarships and bursaries at the school.

4. Overview of Role.

The Finance Manager is a critical role within the Bursar's Department with wide-ranging financial and organisational responsibilities. The incumbent needs to be exceedingly organised, scrupulously honest and highly self-motivated as the role is pivotal in a demanding and busy office environment. The Finance Manager must either hold formal financial qualifications or benefit from extensive relevant experience. The incumbent is assisted by two Accounts Assistants (one being part time).

The job holder joins a team of support staff dedicated to the overall effective running of the school. There will be times when he or she will be required to cross boundaries and work in other areas outside his or her normal area of expertise in the interests of the school. Therefore the job holder must be able to understand the wider context of support operations within the school.

The Finance Manager must be familiar with technology and willing and able to be innovative when reviewing current practices and procedures to improve workflows and efficiency. There is potential to grow the role such that the Finance Manager's relationship with governors, who are the trustees of the charity, develops including attendance at governor meetings.

5. **Main Role.** The main role of the Finance Manager is to manage on a day to day basis the school's accounting system which includes responsibility for the payroll, production of the school fee invoices and the accurate and timely running of the purchase ledger. The Finance Manager is responsible for the production of management accounts, assisting the Bursar with the annual Budget and preparation of all elements of the annual audit.

6. **Key Tasks.** The Finance Manager's key tasks are set out below.

Accounts. The Finance Manager is responsible to the Bursar for the efficient day to day running of the school's accounts. This includes the following key activities:

- The day to day nominal ledger control and control account reconciliation together with allocation of expense/nominal ledger codes to correct cost centres.
- Control of cash books for the school, its Trading Company and the Charitable Fund.
- Carry out a formal monthly bank and petty cash reconciliations as well as routine monitoring.
- Responsibility for the overall structure of the billing and sales ledgers including the allocation of pupil and letting codes.
- Overall management of the purchase ledger and reconciliation of suppliers' accounts together with allocation of purchase invoices to nominal ledger cost centres.
- Responsible for termly and annual accrual and prepayments.
- Responsible for the structure of the nominal ledger.
- Generation of management information reports for the Bursar and budget holders.
- Lead on the technical workings of the school's accounting software package and being the first point of contact with the suppliers.
- Ensuring that all routine and appropriate financial discipline routines are in place and executed.
- Lead on the production of letting invoices utilising data from the Bursar's office.
- Prepare and participate as necessary in the school's annual financial audit.

Management Accounts and Budgets. The Finance Manager will lead on the production of the termly management accounts for consideration by the Bursar and Board of Governors. This will

include preparation of a variance analysis. The Finance Manager will advise on surplus and deficit analysis as required and recommend areas of cost saving where thought prudent. The Finance Manager will lead on the production of the Balance Sheet and will assist the Bursar in production of the annual budget including the input of the annual budget onto the accounting software.

Fees. The Finance Manager oversees the production of the termly school fees.

- Receive and process the disbursements from school departments and allocate them to the correct pupils.
- Control the allocation of Fees in Advance.
- Receive and process receipts from parents and ensure they are credited to the right account.
- Produce and distribute the termly school fees.
- Maintaining good relationships with the parents of the pupils.
- Assist the Bursar in the management of debtors in accordance with the published Protocol.

Payroll. The Finance Manager oversees the production of the monthly payroll and has a leading responsibility for the administration of pensions.

- Produce the monthly payroll together with related work on sickness and maternity benefits, National Insurance etc.
- Act as first point of contact for Inland Revenue and Pensions Regulator enquiries.
- Generate the monthly and annual pension returns to the Teachers' Pension Agency, Royal London and Peoples Pensions.
- Preparation and presentation of the annual Teachers' Pension audit to the school's auditors.
- Preparation and submission of P11Ds to HMRC.
- Lead on the production of peripatetic staff payments.
- Advise the Headmistress and Bursar on appropriate remuneration of new staff including the calculation of holiday pay in line with current legislation.

Purchase Ledger. The Finance Manager oversees the maintenance of the Purchase Ledger.

- Maintaining good relationships with all local tradesmen and suppliers
- Ensuring that all invoices are correctly approved and that all suppliers are paid within agreed payment terms

Staff.

- Act as the Line Manager for the two Accounts Assistants providing appropriate support and direction including formal appraisal.

Miscellaneous.

- Lead author for the school's Finance Handbook.
- Responsible for the management of petty cash within the school.
- Management of the school's system for staff expenses claims and repayment.
- Management of the accounts office.
- Attendance and contributing to the Bursar's weekly coordination meetings.
- Standing in for absent accounting staff.
- Security of the accounts office, sensitive documentation and petty cash.
- Routine signatory on all payments up to £2,000 and thereafter joint signatory.

- First Point of Contact with the School's bank and day to day management of the transfers between bank accounts.
- Maintenance of and operation of the asset register.
- Preparation of invoices and VAT returns for the school's trading company.
- Preparation and reconciling of statutory returns to HMRC.
- Liaison with the school's auditors with regard to the preparation of the annual PAYE settlement agreement.
- Preparation of all relevant documents, ledgers and files for annual audit, with particular reference to prepayments and accruals.
- Any other reasonable task requested by the Headmistress or Bursar

7. **Line Manager.** The Line Manager for the Finance Manager is the Bursar.

8. **Person Specification.** The successful applicant must have:

- A pleasant and calm demeanour able to work in a friendly and helpful manner with both teaching and support staff who seek advice and support from the accounts office.
- The ability to lead the accounts team in a positive, open and approachable fashion.
- A willingness to proactively explore new methods of working, including the adoption of innovative IT and software solutions, to streamline and improve the school's finance function.
- In depth knowledge of Sage 200 Accounts, Sage 50 Payroll and Sage 50 PI ID software.
- A willingness and aptitude to understand how other software programmes interact with Sage such as the school's information management system - iSAMs.
- An understanding of charitable accounts and working knowledge of the latest charities SORP and how they relate to independent schools.
- A positive and optimistic approach to life coupled with a sense of humour.
- A confident and mature disposition and able to demonstrate the ability to deal with a wide-range of demands in a tactful and appropriate manner.
- The ability to cope under pressure by maintaining a professional attitude and good humour when dealing with competing priorities.
- The willingness to cross boundaries and where necessary "roll up sleeves" to assist in other areas not normally associated with the primary role.
- The ability to be a team player able to work closely with other colleagues within a small office.
- Good interpersonal skills with the ability to express oneself effectively in both the written and spoken word.
- The ability to organise and prioritise work.
- Sympathy with the religious and educational objectives of the School.
- Excellent attention to detail and comfortable working with figures.
- A naturally proactive approach to work, able and willing to go the extra mile to produce work of the highest standard.
- Formal financial technician qualifications or to benefit from extensive accounting experience.

9. **Conditions.**

Hours: This is a management position and the incumbent will be expected to manage his or her own working hours in line with the needs of the school. The normal hours of work are 40 hours per week from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday with a 30 minute unpaid lunch break. However, at peak periods it is not unusual for working hours to be longer, particularly when fees are being prepared or prior to the annual audit. These additional hours do not attract additional salary.

Holidays: Four weeks paid holiday per annum or pro rata thereof rising to five weeks per annum after one year, in addition to Bank Holidays which fall during school holiday periods. You may be expected to work on the first May Bank Holiday as it falls in term time.

Salary: £55,000 to £60,000 per annum depending on qualifications and experience.

Pension: The successful candidate will be auto-enrolled into the school's workplace pension scheme. There will be an option to join the alternative senior support staff scheme which offers a 10% employer contribution.

Probationary Period: The first four months of employment will be a probationary period during which notice by either side will be 1 week.

Notice: Three months by either party after the probationary period.

Other: Lunch is currently available free of charge during term time as are hot beverages.

10. Applications. All applicants should complete the application form (addressed to the Bursar, Mr GK Brand) and send to Mrs Nic MacRobbie, St Mary's School Ascot, St Mary's Road, Ascot SL5 9JF with a full CV and covering letter. Applications should be received by the school by 12 noon on 28 January 2022. First interviews will be on 1 February 2022.

ST MARY'S SCHOOL ASCOT

ANNEX A

BACKGROUND



History of St Mary's School Ascot

St Mary's was founded in 1885 by members of the English Province of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM), now called the Congregation of Jesus (CJs). This Institute had itself been founded in the early 17th century by Mary Ward, an English woman born in Yorkshire during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. CJ schools are to be found in Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Eastern Europe, Latin America, India, Korea, Zimbabwe and Israel. In England the former IBVM schools in York, Hampstead and Cambridge have been handed over to Catholic lay trusts.

The original St Mary's Convent in Ascot started with only eight nuns and seven pupils. Gradually the school grew, both in terms of the number of pupils and the range of facilities. In the 1980s, as the members of the Convent's community of nuns diminished in number, a separate trust was established for the school with a board of governors responsible to the trustees. In 1995 the School's Trust purchased the Ascot property from the IBVM in order to ensure the long term security of the school. The school retains very strong links with the CJ order. Mrs Danuta Staunton became the second lay headmistress in September 2019.

VISION

To provide a modern and holistic Catholic education of outstanding quality for young women to inspire and empower them to play their full part in the global community.

ETHOS

The school's Ethos to realise this Vision is:

- Nurturing in each pupil a sense of their own worth and talents by fostering their intellectual, spiritual and personal development.
- Developing in each pupil a love of learning and independent thought through a rigorous academic education.
- Promoting a strong sense of personal responsibility, kindness, cooperation and social justice founded in respect for the diverse needs of others in a global community.
- Encouraging each pupil to enjoy the full sacramental life and spiritual richness of the Catholic Church.
- Fostering a partnership between parents, school and the wider community.
- Inspiring in each pupil the confidence to collaborate and to lead through an enriching and fulfilling boarding experience.
- Following in the spirit of Mary Ward who cherished 'freedom of spirit, sincerity, and a cheerful disposition'.

FEATURES

The Board of Governors defines the school through five features:

1. **A Roman Catholic school.** Over 97% of pupils and over 50% of staff are Roman Catholic. We have a full-time resident Catholic chaplain.

2. **A girls' school.** St Mary's puts the interest of girls first, allowing them to reach their full potential in all that they choose to do.
3. **A full boarding school.** Over 95% of our pupils are full termly boarders and the rest are day boarders. All staff contribute to the boarding life of the school.
4. **A relatively small school.** We are proud to be a small school which enables us to provide first class individual education and pastoral care to all our pupils.
5. **An academic school.** St Mary's has a strong record of academic excellence. In 2021, 88% of all A Levels were graded A* or A and 84% of all GCSEs were graded 9 or 8. There are over 120 pupils in the Sixth Form all following A Level courses, and all are supported in their journeys into higher education, including Oxbridge.

1. Roman Catholic

The Chapel is at the heart of the school, both in a physical and spiritual sense, and the school community comes together on most mornings to pray, sing and worship. The girls and staff all contribute to worship in a variety of ways, including by serving, reading in Chapel and being Eucharistic ministers for whole school Masses. House Masses are also celebrated, giving the girls the opportunity for worship in a more informal setting. All pupils once a year have a one or two day retreat. This is a time set aside from normal lessons and activities for quiet prayer and reflection. The school has a resident Chaplain who is also a governor. Every year the sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated with the confirmands being prepared for the sacrament by members of the school's community.

2. All Girls

The school is passionate about single sex education and the opportunities that this provides for our pupils. Throughout the school, girls are given leadership opportunities through the many pupil-led committees such as the School Council, the Eco Committee, FemSoc, the Diversity Discussion Group, the Food Committee, the Cyber & Technology Committee, the Socials Committee, the Wellbeing Committee and the Pet Welfare Committee. St Mary's prides itself on its links with boys' schools which allow girls to meet and interact with boys both academically and socially. These events include social evenings such as Scottish dancing or wine tasting as well as debating, academic societies, Oxbridge and medic interview practice days and Confirmation preparation days.

3. Boarding and Co-curricular

St Mary's School Ascot is a full boarding school and the pupils are in attendance for all weekends other than the scheduled exeat weekends, when the majority go home. This means that the school remains a vibrant and busy environment throughout the evenings and weekends. The girls take part in a wide range of clubs and activities as well as drama, music, sport, lectures and academic support sessions. Even the few girls who are not resident take a full part in the boarding life of the school and are known as "day boarders", reflecting the full boarding nature of the school.

Pupils from Years 7 to 11 are housed in the main school building and sleep with their year groups under the care of residential staff. Pupils in the Sixth Form are resident in townhouses of 10-12 girls, the Lower Sixth in the Mary Ward Courtyard and the Upper Sixth in the Mary Breen Courtyard. Residential boarding staff live in both courtyards, and boarding duties are also undertaken by some academic staff, Evening Boarding Assistants and Graduate Assistants. All staff who are tutors also contribute two evening duties in school per term. The Infirmary is located within the main building and is staffed 24 hours a day by qualified nurses who are always on call to give medical advice and assistance. Heads of House and the Chaplain are key members of the pastoral team. We are

committed to refurbishing much of our boarding accommodation and have recently installed new bathrooms and showers in Year 7 as part of this rolling programme.

The importance of strong pastoral care is key to our boarding provision. Nurturing and encouraging our pupils enables them to feel empowered and ambitious, and is vital to the feel and experience at school. The House structure is central to our provision and we will be introducing a new House to the school from September 2022. The new House will sit alongside the five existing “through” Houses for girls from Year 7 to the Lower Sixth – Babthorpe, Bedingfeld, Poyntz, Rookwood and Wigmore. The new House will be named Dawson House, after Catherine Dawson (1622-1967) who was a member of Mary Ward’s Society during her lifetime. Introducing the new House will result in fewer girls in each House, enabling us to enhance further our pastoral care and increase the time that Heads of House are able to devote to individuals.

St Mary’s is a very welcoming and open community and parents and siblings are warmly invited into the school for many events such as Sunday Mass, sports fixtures, drama productions, concerts, dance shows, parents’ retreats and a series of talks for parents. We aim to make it feel like a home from home, with comfortable bedrooms, and the girls can even bring their small pets to have with them at school in the Pet Shed.

The co-curricular provision at St Mary’s is outstanding. In Art, the girls benefit from a generously equipped art complex and opportunities to work with a wide variety of media, including ceramics, textiles, photography, print-making, painting and drawing. Girls are encouraged to use the art facilities in the evenings and at weekends and pupils’ work is exhibited throughout the school.

St Mary’s enjoys a thriving Music department which inspires great enthusiasm in the girls. There are regular opportunities to showcase musical talent, including informal lunchtime concerts, the annual Voices by Candlelight concert, three carol services and the Vocal and Orchestral Concert. There is also a thriving Rock Soc and Session Bands as well as regular Open Mic nights involving girls of all ages. The girls also organise their own major events and the Summer Soirée, a concert designed by Sixth Form pupils to encourage younger girls to perform, is another highlight.

Drama plays a major role in nurturing the girls’ self-confidence by developing their creative, social and communication skills. As well as academic drama lessons, girls develop their skills both on stage and behind the scenes in a wide range of productions including, recently, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, a socially distanced Jane Eyre, The Canterbury Tales and Treasure Island. The state-of-the-art performing arts centre, the Rose Theatre, is situated at the heart of the school and hosts major musicals and theatre productions, as well as small scale dramas, lectures, debates, cinema presentations and theatre in the round, all with professional sets and technical equipment.

Sport is another major feature of St Mary’s life and the pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide programme of sport and fitness activities to enable them to develop their strengths and talents. The school regularly produces county champions and sees pupils compete at county, regional and national levels. Sport is celebrated at St Mary’s on an annual basis at the annual Celebration of Sport event when girls and their parents meet and are inspired by professional sports men and women. The variety of sporting activities on offer includes the major sports of hockey, netball, tennis, swimming and athletics, as well as a full dance programme, and other activities such as trampolining, fencing, self-defence and yoga.

The profile of sport at St Mary’s is reflected in the range of impressive sports facilities which includes a 400m all-weather athletics track with associated field event facilities, tennis and netball courts, two floodlit AstroTurf hockey pitches and a 25m indoor heated swimming pool. The Orchard Centre includes a full-size indoor sports hall, a fitness suite, two squash courts and a mirrored dance studio.

The school's co-curricular programme is wide ranging with pupils choosing from a breadth of clubs, societies, talks and activities. Girls are involved in a range of activities with creative options including life drawing, jazz band, creative writing and technical theatre, and recreational sporting options ranging from football and karate to ballet, street dance, aerobics and squash. Thanks to its location, the school shares in a wide variety of activities with other independent schools, including Eton, Harrow and Winchester, and the boys often join the girls for dinners, dances and reeling. We also enjoy close links with local schools in Ascot, as well as many local charities and community projects. Some of our families have been at St Mary's for many generations and we enjoy a very warm relationship with our alumnae.

This boarding environment provides breadth and depth to the girls' academic studies through, for example, the Academy programme whereby selected pupils attend additional evening lectures and follow challenging academic programmes beyond their normal class curriculum. Other pupils benefit from teacher-led extra support sessions, even on Sunday afternoons, to guide them in their preparation for public examinations. The school's Inspirational Women programme of evening lectures is another example of how the boarding environment allows the girls time to broaden their educational experience at St Mary's.

4. Relatively small

Pupils at St Mary's benefit from being part of a small and nurturing full boarding community where staff know every girl. Each girl's progress and development are carefully monitored by key staff who share this information with each other and work together in partnership with parents to enable the girls to flourish.

Every girl is placed in one of five Houses when she arrives in Year 7, Year 9 or the Lower Sixth. The Houses are not physical buildings but vertical communities of pupils under the care of their Head of House. The Heads of House have overall responsibility for the academic development and pastoral care of each pupil in their charge. They also enjoy close relationships with parents, forming a strong partnership of care between the school and home. Heads of House are supported by tutors, Year Co-ordinators, Deputy Heads of House, residential members of staff, the school's Independent Listener and School Counsellor, the school nurses and the school doctor. There is a sixth separate House for the Upper Sixth girls, the Mary Ward House.

The Heads of House live in private houses on the school site, and not in the main building or amongst the girls (with the exception of the Head of the Upper Sixth House). Residential members of staff live in flats within the main building and are responsible for the care of the pupils overnight. Additional Evening Boarding Assistants and Graduate Assistants help with the care of the girls in the evenings. Accommodation for the pupils is organised by age group, with the younger girls sleeping in dormitories and shared bedrooms. The older girls are in double or single rooms with all girls in Year 11 and above in single rooms. Each year group also has a common room where they enjoy evening snacks and can relax together.

5. Academic

St Mary's is an academic school which fosters a real love for learning, with an exceptional record of success in public examinations, regularly placing it amongst the best schools in the country. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum to GCSE, with girls also participating in the Skills for Life programme which is part of the school's commitment to personal, social, health and citizenship education.

In Years 10 and 11 girls typically take ten subjects to I/GCSE. In the Lower Sixth girls begin with four A Levels and continue with three into the Upper Sixth. In addition to their A Level

subjects, girls may choose to do the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). The Sixth Form programme includes an Electives programme, a general course in Religious Studies, academic support sessions and a series of events to extend Academy pupils.

Our outstanding public examination results and the consequent university places that are offered to our pupils belie our broad intake and are evidence of the significant value added achieved across all subjects. In 2021 at I/GCSE our results were 62% grade 9, 84% grades 9 and 8 and 95% grades 9 to 7. 48% of the pupils gained 10 or more grades at 8 or 9 and those awarded 8-12 grades at 9 or 8 made up an impressive 72% of the year group. At A Level 58% of grades were at A*, including 22 candidates who gained 3 A*, and 88% of grades were awarded A*/A.

Our Upper Sixth leavers all continue to universities or other forms of higher education. University offers always cover a wide range of subjects from a variety of leading universities in the UK and beyond including, in 2021, 10 offers from Oxford and Cambridge colleges (18%) and 80% of pupils taking up places at Russell Group Universities and an additional 5 pupils going to St Andrews. Among the Upper Sixth UCAS applicants, 87% of girls secured their first-choice placement and 96% of girls secured a place at their first or insurance choice. 5 girls went to universities in the USA, to Pomona, Georgetown, UCLA, Dartmouth and Columbia. 2 girls are studying Medicine at the University of Hong Kong and 3 girls are heading to universities in Paris or Madrid.

School governance and finances

The school is a registered charity (number 290286) and a company limited by guarantee (number 01844327). The Council Members, who meet annually, act as guardians of the ethos of the school and delegate the strategic leadership, management and administration of the school to the Board of Governors who meet termly. The school's formal relationship with the Congregation of Jesus is now limited to their welcome representation on the Council and the Board of Governors.

Despite the relatively small size of the school, the school's finances are very strong with a healthy operating surplus generated on an annual basis. The school has invested significantly over the last thirteen years in a series of major capital projects culminating in the new Upper Sixth boarding house (the Mary Breen Courtyard) which includes a pastoral centre and associated staff accommodation which all opened in September 2018.