



Step by Step School

Building skills, maximising potential.

STEP BY STEP SCHOOL

HEADTEACHER CANDIDATE PACK

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CHAIR OF GOVERNORS WELCOME LETTER



Dear Candidate,

On behalf of the Board of Governors, I am delighted that you are considering applying for the role of Headteacher at the East Sussex based Step by Step School. We are looking for an inspiring and dedicated leader to motivate and guide a highly skilled professional team in our specialist setting.

Step by Step School is a registered charity and independent specialist school for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) rated as outstanding by Ofsted. Our expertise is to use the Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) approach embedded into all areas of teaching and learning, ensuring a highly structured, evidence-based education, that meets the individual needs of our pupils and delivers outstanding outcomes

In light of the growing numbers of children with autism and the recent Government white paper on SEND, the Trustees are looking to both grow the school, especially in the younger years, and to find ways of utilising our skills and expertise by providing services to the state SEND sector for young people with Autism.

We support pupils aged 4 to 19, with 36 students currently enrolled and a current capacity for 40. Our vision includes substantially increasing our capacity in the next three years. Our dedicated staff team includes over 70 staff, with professionals across multiple disciplines, including Behaviour Analysts, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and qualified teachers. Together, we work to equip our pupils with the skills needed for a successful transition to life beyond school.



Your ability to lead and build effective leadership teams will be essential, as will your proven experience of successfully working with Trustees and Governing Boards. We are looking for a leader to build strategic partnerships with stakeholders, who is financially savvy and experienced in working with modern digital platforms. Most importantly, we are looking with someone who has the ambition, vision and commercial acumen to build on the school's success and prepare it for a future of growth and educational excellence.

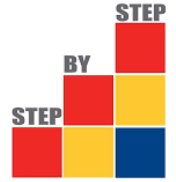
As Headteacher, you will have the opportunity to lead a passionate and dedicated team, all of whom are determined to make a real and lasting difference in the lives of children and families affected by autism. This is a rewarding and unique leadership role, offering the chance to not only shape the future of Step by Step School but also impact the future of specialist education for pupils with ASD.

If this opportunity excites you, we would love to hear from you. We look forward to receiving your application.

Best wishes,

Martin Colyer

OUR VISION, MISSION & VALUES



‘BUILDING SKILLS, MAXIMISING POTENTIAL’

Our mission is to maximise the potential of children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) through evidence-based, individually tailored, outstanding teaching, enabling them to thrive and lead happy, confident lives.

Our values are embodied in the acronym LEARNS:



LAUGHTER

Fun, motivating learning that builds confidence.



EVIDENCE

Evidence-based practice for effective learning and progress.



ASPIRE

For all stakeholders to the individual.



RESPECT

For every person to be treated with dignity.



NURTURE

Every success is recognised, praised and celebrated.



SAFE

An environment where the pupils and staff feel safe and supported.



ABOUT US



OUR SCHOOL

Step By Step School is a small but ambitious independent day school for autistic children and young people. It is situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty, close to the thriving and cultural market towns of East Grinstead and Forest Row which have diverse and interesting communities appealing to all ages. The school was set up as a registered charity in 2004 by parents of children with autism.

We provide specialised teaching for primary, secondary and sixth-form pupils, aged 4-19. The defining aspect of our school is individualised teaching for each pupil based on Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) principles.

FACILITIES

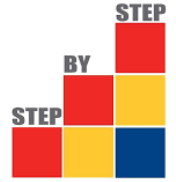
Step by Step School is in the process of securing a long-term lease for its four acre site which will give it the security of tenure to further invest in the growth of the school's capacity and facilities over the next three years.

Currently there are 36 pupils on roll, but the Board have a vision of substantially increasing capacity and growing the number of pupils over the next 3 years, especially in the younger years. In addition, the Board is looking to build strategic partnerships with the state SEND sector by finding ways of leveraging our skills and expertise through the provision of services to the state SEND sector for young people with autism.

The most recent Ofsted inspection in September 2025 rated the school as outstanding in all areas, and commended staff for encouraging independence, building skills, particularly in communication and maximising pupil potential.



HEADTEACHER JOB DESCRIPTION



Job Title: Headteacher

Start Date: September 2026 or January 2027

Salary: Excellent

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

The Headteacher will provide strategic leadership and day-to-day management of Step By Step School, ensuring the highest standards of education and care for all pupils. You will be responsible, with the school's Governors, for creating a shared vision for the school's continued expansion and building of strategic partnerships with the State and private SEND sectors to utilise our skills and expertise in evidence-based ABA. All focused on achieving outstanding outcomes for all learners while supporting their transition to adult life and independence.

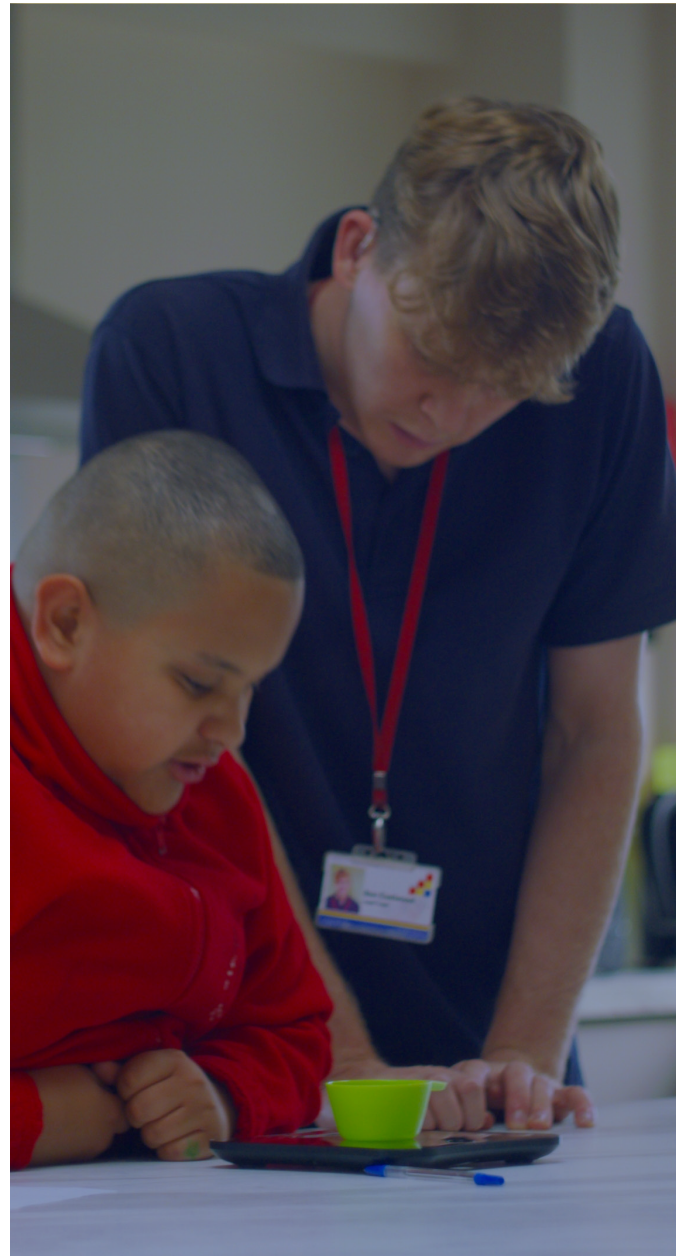
KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership and Vision

- Work collaboratively with the Governing Body to develop a clear, ambitious vision for the school's future.
- Lead the creation, communication and implementation of the School Development Plan and strategic vision.
- Establish and maintain the school's ethos, values, and culture.
- Ensure the school meets all statutory requirements, educational best practice and Independent School Standards.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- Ensure the delivery of a broad, balanced, and engaging curriculum adapted for students with ASD.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of specialist teaching and learning approaches across the school.
- Ensure the implementation of effective assessment systems that recognise diverse learning profiles and track meaningful progress.
- Oversee initiatives to develop autism-specific pedagogical practices and interventions.
- Promote innovative instructional strategies and approaches that enhance pupil engagement, learning, and development based on Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) best practices.
- Ensure smooth transition planning for post-16 and adult services.



Leading and Managing Staff

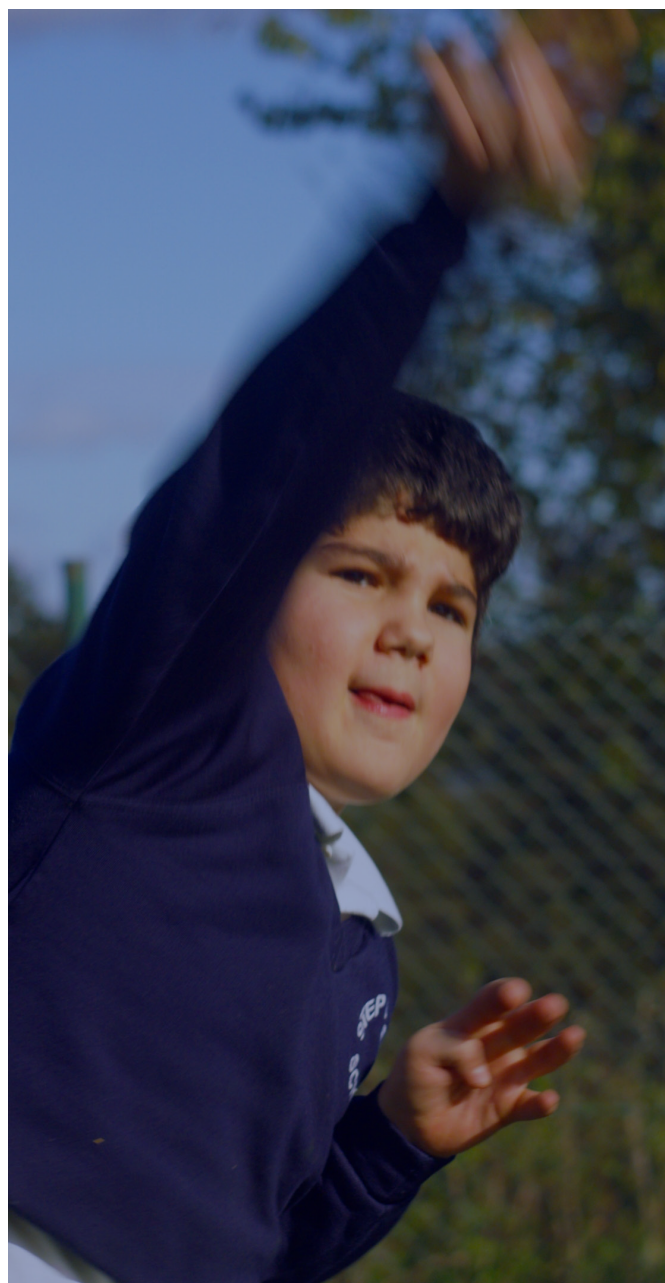
- Attract, recruit, develop, and retain high-quality teaching and support staff, according to safer recruitment principles and school policies.
- Create a positive working environment that promotes collaboration and specialist knowledge sharing.
- Implement effective performance management systems focused on autism education outcomes.
- Provide specialised professional development for staff, providing opportunities for training, career development and growth.
- Build leadership capacity across the school with deep understanding of ASD needs.
- Lead and motivate staff to deliver high-quality teaching and learning experiences.
- Establish rigorous, fair and transparent systems and measures for managing the performance of all staff, addressing any under-performance and supporting staff to continuously improve.

Pupil Welfare and Inclusion

- Create a safe and inclusive school environment where pupils feel supported, valued, and able to thrive academically and socially.
- Foster strong partnerships with Local Authorities and work with them pro-actively to meet the agreed pupil target numbers, identify and admit pupils who have the ability to thrive in the school setting.
- Oversee the setting and agreement of annual pupil fee scales with Local Authorities which reflect costs incurred in meeting their agreed needs and generating budgeted surpluses.
- Ensure the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils, recognising vulnerability factors associated with ASD.
- Ensure that all pupils have personalised Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) that address their unique needs and goals.
- Ensure each pupil is appropriately challenged with clear targets assessed at each stage of development and that progress is effectively monitored, recorded and evaluated.
- Ensure implementation of positive behavioural support strategies to create a safe and nurturing learning environment.
- Collaborate with mental health professionals to support pupils' emotional and psychological well-being.
- Ensure pupils' development of life skills, independence, and preparation for adulthood.
- Implement robust attendance and anti-bullying policies that protect vulnerable students.

Financial and Resource Management

- Ensure the efficient and controlled use of financial resources, agreeing spending priorities with the governing body and trustees.
- Oversee the effective and efficient management of the financial activities of the School, including annual budget preparation and monthly monitoring, setting fees, salary levels, education resources and managing premises projects.
- Manage and organise the premises efficiently and effectively to ensure it meets the needs of the curriculum and health and safety regulations.
- Lead on procurement and value-for-money decisions.
- Plan for future resource needs and sustainability.
- Ensure that the school's digital platforms, organisation and processes are well considered, efficient and optimise operational efficiencies.



Community Engagement & Partnerships

- Build strong relationships with parents, carers, and families, understanding the unique challenges they face.
- Promote a collaborative approach across school and home environments to achieve generalisation of pupil targets.
- Develop partnerships with autism organisations, specialist services, and community groups.
- Build partnerships with SEND units in mainstream schools and colleges to leverage the school's skills and expertise in specialist education.
- Engage with external agencies including local authorities, social services, health professionals, and transition services.
- Represent the school at ABA, and autism-related forums, networking with other professionals to promote the school to the wider community.
- Provide resources and training for parents to support their children's education and development at home.
- Engage with community organisations and stakeholders to enhance the school's programs and services.

Governance and Accountability

- Work effectively with the Governing Body.
- Prepare reports and presentations for governors, local authorities and other stakeholders.
- Ensure compliance with all statutory requirements and policies.
- Lead on school self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- Prepare for and manage external inspections.
- Keep up to date with changes to educational policies, regulations, and standards set by the government and school inspection services.

Professional Standards

The Headteacher will be expected to meet the [National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers](#), demonstrating:

- Ethical and professional conduct.
- Highly effective leadership and management skills.
- Knowledge of current research in autism education and best practices.
- Strong strategic thinking and planning abilities for complex additional needs.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including with vulnerable families.
- Commitment to continuous improvement and innovation in autism education.
- Understanding of legal frameworks including SEND Code of Practice and Equality Act requirements.

Working Conditions

This is a demanding but rewarding role requiring flexibility, resilience, and dedication. The successful candidate will be expected to work beyond normal school hours as required, including attendance at evening events, governing body meetings, and occasional weekend or activities during school holidays.

Safeguarding

Step by Step School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. All staff are expected to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be subject to enhanced DBS clearance and satisfactory employment references.

This job description reflects the current requirements of the post and may be amended in consultation with the post holder as the school's needs evolve.



ABOUT YOU



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We are looking for a leader who has the ambition, vision and commercial acumen to build on the school's success and prepare it for a future of growth and educational excellence.

Vision & Strategy

- See the bigger picture while managing day-to-day excellence
- Build upon our strong foundations while driving innovation
- Develop the school premises to enable growth in pupil numbers

Leadership Excellence

- Inspire and develop high-performing teams
- Create a culture where everyone thrives
- Demonstrate resilience and adaptability during periods of change
- Build strategic partnerships with stakeholders
- Financially astute and experienced in working with modern digital platforms

WHAT WE OFFER YOU

Competitive Rewards Package

- Excellent salary reflecting the significance of this role
- Professional development opportunities
- Generous employee benefits including DC pension scheme, Employee Assistance Programme, Death in Service benefit
- Excellent school facilities including free, on-site parking and gym

Professional Fulfilment

- Lead a school with a distinctive character and proud heritage, judged outstanding in all areas
- Work with a committed, experienced and supportive staff team
- Enjoy the support of engaged governors and families
- Ability to make a genuine lasting and positive difference to preparing pupils, preparing them for life beyond school

Career Development

- Opportunity to lead during a transformational period
- Platform to showcase innovative educational leadership
- Network with other outstanding SEND leaders
- Build a legacy that will inspire for generation

Quality of Life

- Beautiful location in the East Sussex countryside
- Vibrant local community with outstanding amenities
- Work-life balance in a supportive environment

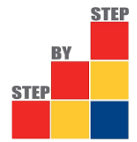
READY TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF SEND

This is more than a career move – it's your chance to lead something truly special and create a lasting legacy. You'll join us at a pivotal moment, with the opportunity to shape not just our immediate future, but the experiences of countless autistic children for years to come.

The role offers the ability to shape the long-term vision in SEND education and see your ideas come to life. You will have the opportunity to work with like-minded passionate professionals who share your commitment to excellence. You will have the freedom and resources to implement your vision and the opportunity to build relationships with engaged families, supportive governors and the wider community.

Step by Step School is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people with autism. All appointments are subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks, including enhanced DBS clearance. We celebrate diversity and welcome applications from all suitably qualified and experienced candidates who share our passion

PERSON SPECIFICATION



	Essential	Desirable
QUALIFICATIONS & TRAINING		
Degree or equivalent qualification	■	
Evidence of continued professional development relevant for the role	■	
Headteacher Professional Qualification (NPQH or equivalent)		■
Masters degree, BCBA, UKBA or special education qualification		■
Qualified Teacher Status		■
EXPERIENCE		
Proven track record of successful leadership	■	
Experience of working with children or young people with autism	■	
Experience in managing capital projects, budgets and resources effectively	■	
Previous experience within a special educational needs setting		■
Experience with managing modern school digital platforms		■
Experience of leading through significant change or growth		■
KNOWLEDGE		
Knowledge and understanding of independent, voluntary and non-maintained sector	■	
Knowledge and understanding of the current SEND landscape and proposed changes	■	
A deep understanding of the challenges faced by autistic students and a commitment to their holistic development.	■	
Understanding of effective governance and compliance	■	
Knowledge of SEN code of practice and EHCPs	■	
Knowledge of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA)		■
Knowledge of transition pathways for ASD pupils post 19		■
SKILLS & ABILITIES		
Outstanding leadership skills with ability to inspire and motivate others	■	
Ability to think strategically, innovate, and develop a clear vision for the school	■	
Financially capable with the ability to build budgets and report to the governors on key performance indicators (KPIs)	■	
Excellent verbal and written communication skills, with the ability to engage effectively and build consensus with all stakeholders	■	
Strong digital capability, and ability to use data to drive improvement and operational efficiencies	■	
Ability to manage challenging situations and manage change effectively	■	
Ability to represent the school effectively in wider professional forums	■	
Skilled in developing innovative curriculum approaches for ASD pupils		■
PERSONAL QUALITIES		
Passion for improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs	■	
Forward thinking and innovative	■	
Resilience and determination in facing challenges	■	
Commitment to collaborative working and shared decision-making	■	
Ability to work effectively under pressure, planning and prioritising to meet deadlines	■	
Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion	■	
Commitment to ensuring safety and well-being of pupils	■	
High ethical standards of integrity, transparency and professionalism	■	



HOW TO APPLY

If you wish to discover more about this exciting opportunity, need any further information or would like to have an informal discussion, please contact Alpha Parish at Academicis, our recruitment partner, on aparish@academicis.co.uk or by phone on 07436 971517 / 01223 907979.

CLOSING DATE:
Monday 25th May 2026

INTERVIEWS:
Thursday 11th and Friday 12th June 2026



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Grinstead Lane, Sharpthorne, East Sussex RH19 4HP