WATERGATE SCHOOL



Headteacher Candidate Pack

ACADEMICIS

Welcome Letter

WATERGATE SCHOOL
'I Can, You Can, Together We Will'

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the post of Headteacher at Watergate School. Watergate is a highly regarded special school serving children aged 4 to 11 with special educational needs and disabilities. We are immensely proud of the difference our school makes in the lives of our pupils and their families, and of the warm, inclusive and ambitious culture that underpins everything we do.

The school is recognised for the exceptional quality of education, care and opportunities it provides. Our dedicated staff work tirelessly to ensure that every pupil is supported, challenged and celebrated as an individual. We are ambitious for every child and committed to continuous improvement in everything we do. We value collaboration, creativity and innovation, and believe that our pupils enrich society through their individuality, talents and achievements.

This appointment comes at a unique and exciting moment in Watergate's history. Following many years of operating across two sites, we have recently brought our whole school community together on a single site. This move has created exceptional opportunities to strengthen collaboration, enhance our curriculum and further develop our specialist provision. Through our Trust and wider partnerships, we are excited to build on Watergate's reputation and further improve outcomes for children and families. We are seeking an exceptional leader who will celebrate and preserve all that makes our school special while providing the vision, ambition and strategic leadership required for the next stage of our journey. We are looking for someone with a deep commitment to children with special educational needs and disabilities, a clear strategic vision and the ability to inspire confidence, ambition and collaboration across the whole school community. Above all, we want a Headteacher who shares our values, places children and families at the centre of every decision and believes passionately in the potential of every child.

This is a rare opportunity to lead a remarkable school with outstanding facilities, a highly skilled and dedicated staff team, committed governors and a supportive community. On behalf of the Governing Body, thank you for your interest in Watergate School. I look forward to receiving your application and learning more about what you could bring to this exceptional school.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Whittaker
Chair of Governors
Watergate School

About Our School



Watergate is a specialist primary school in the London Borough of Lewisham, for children aged four to eleven with severe and profound learning difficulties and complex needs. Many of our pupils have autism as an additional need. Every child has an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or is being assessed for one. We currently have 189 pupils on roll. Our children come from across Lewisham, with some joining us from neighbouring boroughs, and they reflect the borough's rich diversity. We celebrate this through our holistic curriculum, special events, assemblies, whole school projects and family events, which are designed for our children, their families and to enrich children's learning experiences.

Since 2003 we have been based in a purpose-built, U-shaped building in Bellingham, on a split-level site of nearly 8,000 square metres. It has 12 classrooms, 10 group rooms, soft play, recently upgraded sensory rooms, therapy rooms, music and D&T rooms, and a large dining and PE hall. Our specialist learning base supports pupils with PMLD through interactive communication, sensory experiences and discovery. Our hydrotherapy pool supports the needs of pupils with physical disabilities, and is also enjoyed by every child. Physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and our special needs nursing team are an integral part of our school. Our outside areas are specifically designed to meet the needs of all our children, including a fully accessible sensory garden and forest school area.

About Our School - continued





In September 2026 the school opened an additional new two-storey building which has 8 classrooms, group rooms, two specialist teaching rooms, a dining/activity hall, soft play and a food technology kitchen. During the school day the school has sole use of a community MUGA and a natural play area.

At Watergate School, we adopt a low arousal approach to behaviour, viewing all behaviour as a form of communication. We understand that when a child behaves in a certain way, they are intentionally or unintentionally sharing vital information about how they feel and what they want or need. Rather than judging behaviours as 'good' or 'bad', we recognise them as observable expressions of a child's internal thoughts, feelings, and needs.

In line with this philosophy, we do not use physical restraint, sanctions, or consequences. Instead, we believe that children thrive when they are placed in a safe, predictable environment built on mutual trust, understanding, and patience. By providing the necessary time and space, we empower our pupils to develop the essential communication skills and self-regulation strategies they need to make their voices heard.

About Our School - continued

Outreach

Here at Watergate School, we feel passionately about supporting other schools within the local authority through our outreach provision. We currently have a team, led by one of our assistant headteachers, alongside a middle leader and teacher, who work closely with mainstream provisions and resource bases to support learners with SLD within their settings. We have worked with a variety of schools in Lewisham and continue to develop our outreach provision to meet the needs of our local community. This includes inviting others to see our school, learning environment and curriculum in action as well as our team going into schools to work directly with other professionals. We feel deeply passionate that we can support not only pupils within our school, but also those within our local community to help them achieve their full potential. We welcome the opportunity to develop the knowledge and understanding of the needs of SLD pupils within a wider educational context, ensuring that all children thrive and have a sense of belonging and inclusion.



Families

At Watergate we value the role of parents and carers and welcome all opportunities to work closely with them to ensure that all pupils and families receive the support they need. Coffee mornings run at least fortnightly and cover a range of topics delivered by school staff, families, the therapy, nursing teams and the educational psychologists. These are well attended by both parents and carers from Watergate and our Outreach schools within Lewisham.

As a result of the success of the coffee mornings, families have set up their own support networks during the holidays and at weekends. This is led by a designated parent and provides opportunities for families to gather in a social setting and to share their unique experiences with others who understand.

Our community lunches are a highlight of the school year and celebrate all the different cultural cuisines of our school community. Families, staff and friends all contribute a dish from their culture. We also open our doors to the agencies who work closely with us to enjoy the camaraderie and delicious food.

We run regular open afternoons where families are able to come and spend time with their child at school, get involved with a learning activity, and chat with other families. These can be stand alone afternoons and celebrations of specific events such as spring festival.

Our Vision and Values

As Lewis Carroll once said,

> **“The only way to achieve the impossible is to believe that it is possible.”**

Our school is a warm, welcoming place where everyone is encouraged to dream. We pride ourselves in putting the rights of our children first. Our core values of ‘I Can, You Can, Together We Will’ along with our inclusive approach empowers everyone to promote an environment where they can thrive, be happy and realise their full potential. We prepare our pupils for the next steps in their lives, and where everyone’s voice is heard, respected, and valued.

Our holistic curriculum embraces a culture of positive interaction, problem-solving, and creativity. We encourage pupils to take risks and reach for their individual goals.

We are more than just a school; we are a community that spans across London, where families, staff, governors, therapists, and all stakeholders collaborate throughout each child’s learning journey.



Our Collaborative Links



Brent Knoll and Watergate Co-operative Trust

In 2012, Watergate joined forces with Brent Knoll School (a local special all-through school for children with complex social, communication and interaction difficulties including autism) to form the Brent Knoll and Watergate Co-operative Trust.

Its aim is to create an exciting, new way to work with our partners and stakeholders (including local mainstream primary schools, higher education, charities and the Local Authority) to improve the lives of our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families, both inside and outside of school.

Inclusion activities and collaboration are a key focus between Watergate and Brent Knoll. This includes joint training across both schools, liaison with staff teams and Watergate pupils attending weekly sessions at Brent Knoll's Makaton choir.

With a changing educational landscape, it is hoped that there will be opportunities for the Trust to play a key role in developing special education in Lewisham in the coming years. We recognise the value in presenting a co-ordinated approach in dealings with the local authority and in ensuring that the voice of children and young people with SEND and their families in the borough is heard.

Headteacher Job Description

The job description for the Headteacher role is subject to the general conditions for a Headteacher as set out in School Teacher Pay and Conditions Document and the Headteachers' Standards 2020 for Headteachers.

Salary Range: L29 - L35 (£116,772 to £133,661)

Main purpose of the Job

The Headteacher will provide inspirational and effective leadership for Watergate School, securing the highest standards of education, care, wellbeing and achievement for all pupils. The postholder will work with governors, staff, families and partner organisations to deliver the school's vision and values, ensuring every pupil is enabled to achieve their full potential.

Strategic Leadership, School Improvement and Professional

- Lead and communicate a clear vision for the future of the school, rooted in the school values, ethos and motto, 'I Can, You Can, Together We Will'
- Establish a culture of high expectations, inclusion, aspiration and continuous improvement for pupils and staff.
- Lead strategic planning, self-evaluation and school improvement, ensuring priorities are informed by evidence, research and best practice.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of school improvement initiatives and adapt strategies to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils.
- Promote equality, diversity, inclusion and mutual respect throughout the school community.
- Develop leadership capacity at all levels and create the conditions for innovation, collaboration and professional growth.
- Work with governors to determine strategic priorities and ensure effective accountability for standards and outcomes.
- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of educational, SEND and safeguarding developments and ensure these inform school practice.
- Model the highest standards of professional conduct, integrity and ethical leadership.
- Fulfil the requirements of the Headteachers' Standards and the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and undertake duties reasonably required within the scope of the role.



Headteacher Job Description - continued

Leadership of SEND, Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

- Provide strategic leadership of specialist SEND provision and ensure compliance with all statutory responsibilities relating to SEND and inclusion.
- Ensure high-quality teaching, learning and assessment enable every pupil to make excellent progress from their individual starting points.
- Lead the development of a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum that reflects the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils and prepares them for later life.
- Ensure Education, Health and Care Plans are effectively implemented, monitored and reviewed.
- Promote personalised learning, communication, independence, wellbeing and social development across all aspects of school life.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum provision, providing appropriate support and challenge to staff.
- Ensure effective assessment, tracking and reporting systems are used to monitor pupil progress and inform future planning.
- Promote evidence-informed specialist practice, innovation and the effective integration of therapeutic, educational and pastoral approaches.
- Ensure technology, enrichment opportunities and wider learning experiences enhance pupils' achievement and personal development.
- Support successful transitions into, through and beyond the school.

Safeguarding, Behaviour and Personal Development

- Act as the school safeguarding leader and promote a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Ensure full compliance with safeguarding, child protection and safer recruitment requirements, including Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Ensure safeguarding policies, procedures, training and record-keeping systems are implemented and reviewed effectively.
- Promote the welfare, safety, wellbeing and personal development of all pupils through a nurturing and aspirational school culture.
- Ensure behaviour approaches reflect pupils' individual needs and are underpinned by positive behaviour support and an understanding of communication and unmet need.
- Work effectively with families and external agencies to address barriers to learning, attendance, participation and wellbeing.
- Promote independence, resilience, self-confidence and preparation for the next stage of education and life.
- Ensure all pupils learn within a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.



Headteacher Job Description - continued

Leadership and Development of Staff

- Recruit, develop and retain high-quality staff who share the school's vision, values and commitment to inclusive practice.
- Lead, motivate and support staff to achieve the highest standards of professional practice and pupil outcomes.
- Create a positive, collaborative and inclusive culture based on shared accountability, trust and continuous improvement.
- Implement effective performance management, succession planning and leadership development processes.
- Provide access to high-quality professional development, coaching and mentoring opportunities, including specialist SEND training.
- Promote professional reflection, innovation and evidence-informed practice across the workforce.
- Prioritise staff wellbeing, monitor workload and support a healthy and sustainable working environment.
- Ensure effective induction, support and career development opportunities for all employees.
- Deploy staffing structures and resources effectively to meet pupil needs and strategic priorities.

Governance, Accountability and Working in Partnership

- Work openly, constructively and strategically with the Governing Body, providing professional advice, high-quality information and regular reports to support effective challenge, accountability and decision-making.
- Ensure effective systems of accountability operate throughout the school and that all statutory, regulatory and inspection requirements are met.
- Build strong partnerships with parents, carers and families, ensuring they are actively engaged in their children's education, development and wellbeing.
- Work collaboratively with the London Borough of Lewisham, schools, health, social care, therapeutic and educational professionals to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils and their families.
- Contribute actively to the work of the Brent Knoll and Watergate Co-operative Trust, promoting collaboration, school improvement, workforce development and the sharing of specialist expertise across both schools.
- Promote Watergate School as a centre of excellence for special education and contribute to developments in SEND and inclusive practice locally, regionally and nationally.
- Undertake responsibilities associated with the rotating Chief Executive Officer role of the Trust if required.



Headteacher Job Description - continued

Financial Leadership and Resource Management

- Lead strategic financial planning and ensure the effective stewardship of public funds.
- Oversee the preparation and management of the school budget and present financial recommendations to governors.
- Ensure financial sustainability, value for money and compliance with financial regulations and audit requirements.
- Allocate resources according to need and strategic priorities in order to maximise outcomes for pupils.
- Identify and secure additional funding opportunities where appropriate.

Premises, Health and Safety

- Ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of pupils, staff, visitors and contractors at all times.
- Ensure compliance with health and safety legislation through effective policies, risk assessment procedures, emergency planning and monitoring arrangements.
- Maintain high-quality buildings, grounds and specialist facilities that provide safe, accessible and effective learning environments.
- Oversee the maintenance, development and security of the school site and ensure resources are fit for purpose.
- Ensure appropriate insurance, risk management and business continuity arrangements are in place.
- Maximise the opportunities created by the school's consolidated single-site accommodation and ensure facilities support outstanding education.

Safer Recruitment

Watergate School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The successful applicant will be expected to share this commitment. Appointment will be subject to an enhanced DBS check, satisfactory references, medical clearance and all other safer recruitment requirements.



Person Specification

The panel will assess candidates against the following attributes.

	Essential	Desirable
Professional qualifications and experience	▪ Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). ▪ Degree-level qualification. ▪ Evidence of continued professional development and leadership training. ▪ Commitment to ongoing professional learning and reflection.	▪ NPQH or equivalent leadership qualification. ▪ Relevant postgraduate qualification. ▪ Coaching, mentoring or leadership development qualifications.
Leadership Experience and School Improvement	▪ Successful senior leadership experience in a special school or specialist SEND setting. ▪ Proven record of leading whole-school improvement and maintaining high standards. ▪ Experience of self-evaluation, strategic planning and implementing change. ▪ Experience of developing leadership capacity and high-performing teams. ▪ Evidence of successful staff performance management and workforce development. ▪ Experience of working effectively with governors and other stakeholders. ▪ Organised and able to work under pressure, prioritise effectively, delegate and manage the workload of the post.	▪ Existing Headteacher experience. ▪ Experience as Deputy Headteacher or equivalent senior leader in a special school. ▪ Experience of leading organisational growth, expansion or significant change.
SEND, Teaching and Learning	▪ Extensive knowledge and understanding of a wide range of special educational needs and disabilities. ▪ Strong understanding of curriculum design, assessment and pedagogy for pupils with complex SEND. ▪ Proven ability to secure high-quality teaching and learning and improve pupil outcomes. ▪ Knowledge of the SEND Code of Practice and statutory requirements relating to EHCPs. ▪ Understanding of approaches that promote communication, independence, engagement and preparation for adulthood. ▪ Commitment to inclusion and high aspirations for all pupils.	▪ Experience of leading provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties, autism and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties. ▪ Experience of outreach, inclusion or partnership work with mainstream schools. ▪ Experience of innovative and specialist approaches to SEND provision.

Person Specification - continued

	Essential	Desirable
Governance, Accountability and Partnership Working	▪ Ability to work effectively with governors to secure accountability for school performance and pupil outcomes. ▪ Strong understanding of the role of data, self-evaluation and quality assurance. ▪ Experience of working successfully with parents, carers, local authorities and multi-agency partners. ▪ Ability to establish and maintain productive partnerships with schools, external agencies and the wider community. ▪ Understanding of the role of the school within the wider education system and local community. ▪ Commitment to collaborative working and system leadership.	▪ Experience of working within a Trust or collaborative partnership. ▪ Experience of representing a school at local, regional or national level. ▪ Experience of contributing to wider SEND developments beyond one school.
Leadership of People and Resources	▪ Demonstrable ability to inspire, motivate and empower staff and pupils. ▪ Experience of recruiting, developing and retaining high-quality staff. ▪ Ability to build a positive, supportive and accountable organisational culture. ▪ Ability to build strong and effective working relationships and inspire others. ▪ Experience of financial planning and managing resources effectively. ▪ Understanding of workforce wellbeing, workload management and professional development. ▪ Ability to make difficult decisions calmly, fairly and sensitively.	▪ Experience of strategic budget leadership. ▪ Experience of leading large multidisciplinary teams.
Personal Qualities and Values	▪ Clear and compelling communicator with excellent interpersonal and relationship-building skills. ▪ Demonstrates integrity, resilience, emotional intelligence and sound judgement. ▪ Commitment to safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion. ▪ Ability to think strategically whilst maintaining attention to operational detail. ▪ Genuine commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families. ▪ Ability to inspire confidence and build trust across the school community. ▪ Commitment to the values and ethos of Watergate School.	▪ Experience of working within culturally diverse communities. ▪ Knowledge of approaches such as PECS, Makaton, AAC, MOVE or other specialist communication and learning approaches.
Safeguarding	▪ Thorough understanding of safeguarding, child protection and safer recruitment requirements. ▪ Commitment to promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people. ▪ Ability to create and sustain a strong safeguarding culture across the school. ▪ Satisfactory references and ability to obtain enhanced DBS clearance.	▪ Designated Safeguarding Lead experience.

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 Ross Laird at Academicis, our recruitment partner, on rlaird@academicis.co.uk or by phone on 07901 585959 / 01223 907979.

Closing date: Thursday 3rd December 2026

Shortlisting date: Thursday 3rd December 2026

Interviews: Thursday 10th December and Friday 11th December 2026

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Bellingham Site, Lushington Road, Bellingham SE6 3WG