



OLA
OUR LADY'S
ABINGDON



APPOINTMENT OF
HEAD OF FACULTY (RELIGIOUS STUDIES)

FOR SEPTEMBER 2024

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF OLA

Dear Candidate,

This is an exciting time to be joining OLA and a future of opportunity awaits the successful candidate. As the Head of OLA, I am honoured and privileged to be leading a school which is high performing in all areas, and which has the full support of the Governing Board to grow the school pupil headcount, invest in futureproofing the school and develop the staff so that they can empower our pupils to be the best versions of themselves. The value-added for public exam results is excellent; pastoral care is child-centered and consistently of the highest quality, and; the co-curricular programme is growing from strength to strength. OLA is defined by its Catholic ethos and this underpins all that we do:

Each child who joins us embarks on an educational journey, directed by our mission statement, providing for each one in accordance with their needs and encouraged by our ethos summed up in our school motto, "Whatever you do, do it well". Our ethos provides an individual approach that ensures we uncover a child's potential and nurture them to achieve, enabling them to thrive both academically and as people.

Our ethos is reflected in the positive relationships that exist between all members of our school community. We are proud of our distinctive family atmosphere, which fosters a tangible sense of community and happy relationships between staff and pupils.

If you choose to apply for this post, we will give your application all the seriousness it deserves. OLA is a wonderful, vibrant and happy environment in which to work, with a palpable sense of belonging among our staff. The role we are looking to fill is important to the flourishing of the school and I hope you will feel that you are the right person to fill it.

Kind regards,



Mr. Daniel Gibbons
Head of OLA



ABOUT THE SCHOOL

OLA is a Catholic co-educational day school located close to Oxford in the heart of Abingdon, welcoming pupils of all faiths and none. It was established by an Order of Catholic nuns founded by the Venerable Catherine McAuley called the Sisters of Mercy, who came to Abingdon in 1860 at the invitation of Sir George Bowyer of Radley Park. Reverend Mother Clare Moore was a national heroine who had worked closely with Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War - their joint portrait, entitled 'The Mission of Mercy', hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. Recently returned from Constantinople, Mother Clare brought three young Sisters to Abingdon on January 10th 1860 and teaching commenced the very next day. The girls' and boys' schools, now Our Lady's Abingdon School, were actively run by Sisters for almost a century.

Our co-educational ethos provides an atmosphere where pupils are at ease with one another and natural relationships are fostered. OLA is a purposeful, outward- looking school with a happy, family atmosphere that gives children the freedom to develop within a structured framework. As our school motto says:

age quod agis – whatever you do, do it well



MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission Statement reflects the reality of daily life at OLA, and encompasses the vision and values of our founding Sisters at Our Lady of Mercy. 'As God's family we learn to love, respect and forgive - guided by His Word'.

We believe that God created each of us as a unique person with gifts that need to be recognised, celebrated and developed. Inspired by the words of our foundress, Catherine McAuley, "*To each according to their needs*", we encourage a respect for every individual, regardless of background, beliefs or ability.

Our aim is to develop a loving, caring and welcoming community in which all may grow as children of God. In partnership with parents and the wider community we seek to respond to God's invitation to faith, mercy and love. To develop skills for life in an ever-changing world, we cherish integrity, compassion, openness, forgiveness and reconciliation, co-operation and courage. We nurture wisdom, the value of learning, independent thinking, a sense of self-worth and care for each other that all may reach their full potential.

AIMS AND ETHOS

The following are central to our Mission Statement and the school wishes to foster a happy, caring Christian atmosphere in which these aims may be realised:

AIMS

To encourage respect for the worth of the individual and in this way to develop self-confidence

To enable all pupils to achieve their full potential

To guide pupils to make informed moral choices

To develop independent thinking and a love of learning

ETHOS

We believe that every human being is created to become a unique person with gifts that should be accepted and valued.

Our foundress Catherine McAuley said: "*To each according to their needs*".

We owe it to our pupils to help them recognise and achieve the best of which they are capable to obtain the qualifications they need and to develop a sense of personal fulfilment.

A sound Christian framework is important as a basis for the whole of their lives

This is the basis of life-long learning

ACADEMIC

OLA promotes a challenging and progressive curriculum, which reflects the learning requirements of each individual pupil. It aims to nurture independent, analytical and creative thinking and to build the confidence in our pupils to articulate clearly their views of the world around them.

The School achieves strong academic results, as a result of effective and well-developed relationships between pupils and staff and a positive attitude to learning. In 2023, an 95% pass rate was achieved at GCSE, with 69% of all grades at 9 to 6. Our 2023 results were higher than 2019, which was a great achievement. In addition, 46% of pupils achieved at least one 9 grade, demonstrating that pupils can achieve at the highest level in any subject for which they have an aptitude and passion. A Level results were equally impressive, with 57% of all grades at A* to B. Similar to GCSE, almost half of our students achieved at least one A grade. OLA's value-added is outstanding, year on year, and belies our raw results which reflect our relatively broad ability intake. Upper Sixth leavers achieved places at a range of prestigious universities, including Cardiff, Bath, York, Warwick, Kings, Leeds and Birmingham.

In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils study Mathematics, English, Science, a Modern Foreign Language (French or Spanish), Geography, History and Religious Studies as core subjects, alongside other practical-based subjects such as Art, Drama, Music, Design Technology, Food and Nutrition, Latin, PE, Textiles, and Computer Science. Year 9 pupils choose up to four of these practical subjects to study in greater depth.

At GCSE, pupils choose up to three optional subjects in addition to their core subjects of Mathematics, English, Science (Double or Triple) and Religious Studies. There is the option to study Further Maths as an extra GCSE, and also an additional Modern Foreign Language (French or Spanish).

This wide range of options is also offered at A Level, in addition to Economics, Philosophy, Ethics and Religion, Psychology and Business Studies. OLA Sixth pupils study three A Levels, with many choosing the additional option of the Extended Project Qualification. In addition, students can opt for Further Maths as a fourth A-level. University application and career choice guidance is excellent, and the majority of OLA Sixth leavers go on to their first choice of university and to study a diverse range of subjects.



ACADEMIC (continued)

A new faculty structure was introduced from September 2022, the aim of which is to improve the efficacy of the academic leadership structure and create a clear middle leadership level within the School. The faculty structure comprises:

1. **English, Drama and Film and Media** (including responsibility for Academic Enrichment and Literacy)
2. **Mathematics and Computer Science** (including responsibility for Academic Scholarship and Numeracy)
3. **Science** (including Academic PE)
4. **Religious Studies** (including responsibility for Chaplaincy, PSHE and RSE)
5. **Creative Arts** (Art, Design Technology, Food Technology, Textiles and Music)
6. **Humanities** (Business, Economics, Geography, History and Psychology)
7. **Languages** (Modern Languages and Classics) (including line management of the EPQ Coordinator)

Within the above are Subject Coordinators for each subject who report to the Head of Faculty. Academic staff report to the Subject Coordinator who, in turn, report to the Head of Faculty. The Head of Faculty is also a 'Subject Coordinator' and, as such, will line manage the staff within their own subject.

OLA provides academic enrichment beyond the classroom and curriculum. A strong track record exists of enriching pupil experiences by applying their learning in real contexts through a varied trips programme. The School runs a Scholarship Programme, which seeks to enrich pupil experiences and extend their learning beyond the classroom. Lower Sixth pupils benefit from tailored programmes in preparation for life beyond school, and there is a parallel path for those who have expressed an interest in Oxbridge.



THE WHOLE PERSON

OLA offers a growing programme of activities that enable our pupils to explore passions and to develop important skills and characteristics, including teamwork and determination, all within the safety of a caring and compassionate community. The rich programme of activities caters for broad tastes, from creative arts, coding and textiles to a variety of academic clinics.

The School has a particularly impressive offering in the performing arts. Several choirs and orchestral groups provide regular music performance opportunities, and take-up of instrumental lessons is high. Music partnerships with local schools are strong, and visiting musicians provide a series of masterclasses. OLA has its own drama studio and theatre. Pupils across the school community are involved in productions, including an annual inclusive whole-school musical. The School is also a LAMDA (London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art) centre through which pupils can develop skill and confidence in public speaking, articulation, presentation and acting skills.

OLA offers a range of sports for all ages and abilities to encourage participation, fitness and an enjoyment of team sport. Sports on offer include swimming, gymnastics, cricket, athletics, rugby, netball, hockey and football. OLA has generous facilities including a heated indoor swimming pool and access to the extensive range of facilities at the Tilsley Park Centre. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is also popular at OLA, with many pupils supported through to the Silver and Gold Awards.

In the development of our pupils OLA pays special attention to pastoral care and spiritual nourishment, promoted by all staff but particularly by our dedicated chaplaincy team that arranges retreats, assemblies and liturgies. Our beautiful Chapel is a real centre for prayer and our Catholic ethos ensures all pupils, whatever their background, have opportunities to step back from the busy school day and benefit from quiet reflection. We have a justified reputation for being a caring, compassionate and nurturing school with a calm purpose that gives all pupils the opportunity to thrive in a safe environment.

OLA prepares children for life. Pupils leave us at 18 as young adults not only equipped academically for university, but as well-balanced individuals with the confidence to make their way successfully in the world beyond school. Following their chosen paths with enthusiasm and confidence, they can use the broad skills they have acquired at OLA to become valuable members of society.



JOB DESCRIPTION

For an aspiring senior leader, this post offers invaluable experience for future promotion. The Head of Faculty (RS) is also the Subject Coordinator for RS, and line manages both the RS teaching staff and the PSHEE/RSE Coordinator.

The successful applicant will be able to work effectively with the other Heads of Faculty and the Assistant Head (Academic) in driving the school forward. We are striving for a vibrant and rich learning experience, which will futureproof pupils and deliver high value-added results. The post of Head of Faculty will be a challenging and immensely fulfilling role for the right candidate.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES FACULTY

The Religious Studies Faculty is responsible for the delivery of RS (Years 7-11), Mercy Studies (Years 7-8) and Core RE (Sixth Form), and also PSHEE and RSE. The RS Faculty includes a suite of 3 rooms, and a range of textbooks and online resources.

As well as responsibility for RS, Mercy Studies, Core RE and PSHEE/RSE, the RS Faculty is deeply invested in the Catholic life of the School, and the formation of pupils in the faith. OLA's 'Catholic Values' strategic aim is: *"A loving, caring and welcoming community in which all may grow as children of God."*

The core purpose of our Mission Statement, *"To each according to their needs"*, underpins all aspects of School life. The 'how' is encapsulated by our motto, *"Age Quod Agis"* (*"Whatever you do, do it well"*), and all of our teachers encourage and support each individual in living out our core Catholic values:

- Kindness
- Mutual respect
- Personal integrity
- Making the most of the gifts bestowed upon you by God

At OLA, we support Portsmouth Diocese's vision of *"Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church"*:

- Catholic Life and Mission
 - This is best shown by our commitment to our core purpose.
 - Promotion of Catholic School Teaching in all areas of School life.
 - Charity fundraising eg Emmaus Oxford, Abingdon Foodbank, CAFOD, Save the Children.
- Religious Education – RE continues to be a core subject to GCSE level and is an integral part of our curriculum.
- Collective Worship – we have a separate Liturgical Calendar which shows how and when we worship together as a community.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A HEAD OF FACULTY

Academic Standards

- Strive for highest academic standards within faculty.
- Coordinate Development Planning, Quality Assurance and Performance Development for faculty.
- Oversee the production of schemes of work within the faculty which are progressive, and enable pupils to acquire key knowledge and develop understanding and subject-specific skills throughout their learning.
- Oversee assessment within the faculty, both informal and formal, which will provide key data on pupil progress, and inform future learning.

Leadership

- Liaise with the DH (Academic) in producing the Academic Development Plan.
- Produce the Faculty Development Plan.
- Coordinate the Quality Assurance, Performance Development and Tracking and Monitoring systems for the faculty to identify strengths and areas for development.
- Work with the DH (Academic) and other HoFs in undertaking Quality Assurance for all academic areas.
- Liaise with the DH (Academic) and other HoFs in identifying whole staff CPD needs.
- Coordinate CPD for faculty staff.
- Submit annual budget proposal for faculty.
- Support DH (Academic) in reviewing academic policies and procedures.
- Deputise for the DH (Academic) as necessary.

Management

- Line manage SCs.
- Provide support for faculty staff.
- Produce Faculty Handbook.
- Participate in recruitment of faculty staff.
- Induction for new SCs.
- Chair regular faculty meetings.
- Manage faculty resources.
- Oversee faculty resources for staff and pupils.

Curriculum

- Implement school's pedagogical approach to learning within the faculty.
- Liaise with SCs in annual review of schemes of work and key assessments, and in review of exam specifications.
- Oversee academic enrichment programmes within the faculty.
- Oversee university support and guidance.
- Provide key faculty information for the School's publications.

Pupil Progress

- Produce detailed analyses of tracking and monitoring data to ensure that all pupils make expected progress.
- Oversee intervention for pupils to ensure that all relevant pupils are supported in improving their performance.
- Liaise with relevant staff in dealing with academic concerns related to the faculty.

Timetable

- Work with the DH (Academic) and other HoFs in evaluating and reviewing the timetable.
- Liaise with DH (Academic) in determining setting and staffing needs for faculty.

Options

- Work with the DH (Academic) and other HoFs in monitoring pupils' options, and in making recommendations for appropriate study.
- Provide key faculty information for the School's publications on options.

Digital Learning

- Work with the DH (Academic) and other HoFs in evaluating and reviewing digital learning, and in identifying strengths and areas for development so that digital learning can be embedded within pedagogy.
- Develop use of digital learning within the faculty, and coordinate with other HoFs so that best practice is shared.

Teaching

- Teach 30 periods per 2 weeks (FT is 40/50 per 2 weeks).
- To be an excellent teacher.

Health and Safety

- Maintain responsibility for ensuring that all faculty staff are aware of H&S requirements.
- Maintain responsibility for ensuring that all necessary risk assessments are in place for the faculty, and are reviewed as per the H&S Policy.

Other

- To report to DH (Academic) upon request.
- Attend HoFs meetings.
- Liaise with other staff on cross-curricular projects.
- Support the School at School events.
- Support the DH (Academic) in preparing for inspections.



HEAD OF FACULTY: PERSON SPECIFICATION

| Education and Qualifications | Essential | Desirable |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Qualified teacher status | | ✓ |
| A good degree in Theology or Philosophy, or a related discipline. | ✓ | |
| Evidence of commitment to personal/professional development | ✓ | |
| Experience | Essential | Desirable |
| Compelling record of success at middle management level | | ✓ |
| Proven experience of leading and developing teams and in building productive relationships | ✓ | |
| Experience of using School management systems e.g. QA, performance management | | ✓ |
| Experience of academic leadership | ✓ | |
| Proven track record of ensuring excellent academic standards | ✓ | |
| Experience of using data management systems | | ✓ |
| Knowledge and Understanding | Essential | Desirable |
| Knowledge of Safeguarding and other child-related legislation | ✓ | |
| Ability to analyse and use data effectively | ✓ | |
| Clear understanding of academic options systems | ✓ | |
| Ensure appropriate guidance and support is provided for students applying for the most competitive undergraduate courses e.g. Oxbridge. | ✓ | |
| Skills and Attributes | Essential | Desirable |
| Ability to establish good working relationships and effective teamwork | ✓ | |
| Willingness and ability to embrace change | ✓ | |
| Good communication skills | ✓ | |
| Excellent role model for staff and students | ✓ | |
| Ability to generate ideas and drive initiatives | ✓ | |
| Assured communication and presentation skills | ✓ | |
| Attention to detail | ✓ | |
| Excellent ICT skills | ✓ | |
| Outstanding classroom practitioner | ✓ | |
| Personal Qualities | Essential | Desirable |
| Ability to lead, manage and inspire others | ✓ | |
| Highly motivated and able to motivate and inspire staff | ✓ | |
| Enthusiastic and committed to support others beyond the School day | ✓ | |
| A forward-thinking approach | ✓ | |

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| A passion for teaching and learning | ✓ | |
| Excellent interpersonal skills with a range of stakeholders | ✓ | |
| Ability to be reflective and self-critical | ✓ | |
| Display calmness under pressure and have a sense of humour | ✓ | |
| Ability to meet deadlines | ✓ | |
| Drive, adaptability and resilience | ✓ | |
| Ability to be discrete and understand professional boundaries | ✓ | |
| Other Requirements | Essential | Desirable |
| Enhanced DBS Disclosure | ✓ | |
| Ability to understand and demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity | ✓ | |
| Appropriate level of safeguarding training | ✓ | |

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE POST

All teachers are expected to share in supervision duties, attend relevant parents' evenings, staff/departmental meetings, Open Days etc. and to contribute to the co-curricular life of the school.



WORKING AT OLA

Salary

OLA has its own salary scale. Experience and qualifications are considered when setting starting salaries.

Benefits

Lunch is provided at no cost during term time

Free on-site parking.

CPD and training are encouraged

Staff have agreed access to the School's equipment and facilities, including the indoor swimming pool.

Pension

The School currently participates in the DfE Teachers' Pension Scheme and also offers a generous contributory pension scheme for all support staff.

School Fee Reduction

Teaching staff benefit from a staff discount on basic tuition fees of 50% for full-time staff, pro rata for part-time staff, and qualify for this benefit after completing two years of service.

Non-contractual benefits are given at the discretion of the Governing body and can be withdrawn without notice.

Location

The school is located in Abingdon-on-Thames, an historic market town situated eight miles to the south of Oxford with its world-renowned reputation as a centre of academic excellence. The town supports a mixed, international community which enjoys a good selection of facilities situated a just few minutes' walk away from the river and gardens of Abbey Meadows. The town benefits from excellent bus links to Oxford, which is just a 15-minute ride away and provides a wealth of social and cultural opportunities.



SELECTION PROCESS

- **Application deadline:** 9.00am, Friday 22 March
- **Interview date:** Tuesday 26 March
- Applicants are asked to submit a completed school application form. No other form of application will be accepted.
- Please complete the application form in full, ensuring no gaps are left in your education/employment history.
- Two referees should be provided, one of whom must be your current or most recent employer. References will be requested prior to interviews taking place.
- In addition to the interview, candidates can expect to complete other selection exercises.
- Applicants will be required to prove their right to work in the UK at interview. The School is unable to consider candidates who do not already possess the right to work in the UK.
- The successful candidate will be required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and social media check, in addition to other necessary safeguarding measures.
- For any outstanding queries please contact Mrs Julie Braley at headspa@ola.org.uk

Our Lady's Abingdon is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

