

Headteacher Candidate Pack



Willow Park
C of E Primary School



Welcome



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the Headteacher role at Willow Park Church of England Primary School.

Willow Park is a school with a special place in the heart of its community. It is a place where warmth, diversity and compassion are woven into daily life, and where every child is known, valued and supported. As a designated School of Sanctuary, Willow Park is proud to welcome families from all over the world, many of whom have faced adversity or displacement. Our school embraces that diversity and thrives because of it.

We are seeking a Headteacher who will lead with authenticity, vision and care—someone who will stand proudly at the school gate each morning, build deep relationships with families, and act as a powerful advocate for our pupils. You will be stepping into a role where your leadership can truly transform lives, not only through academic excellence but also through love, inclusion, and belief in every child's potential.

This is an exciting time to join Willow Park. The school is partway through an ambitious improvement journey, and the most recent Ofsted monitoring visit recognised the rapid and positive change already taking root. The school is also preparing to join The Leaf Trust—an ambitious, values-driven primary-only multi-academy trust. You will not be alone. As Headteacher, you will be supported and developed within a strong network of leaders, with access to tailored training and shared expertise.

The role also comes with the rare opportunity to shape the future of the school's learning environment. Significant capital investment and estates work are planned to ensure that our children learn in a space that reflects their worth, inspires curiosity, and supports wellbeing.

Whether this is your first Headship or your next leadership challenge, we welcome your application if you are committed to inclusive education, confident in leading improvement, and passionate about community leadership.

We would be delighted to welcome you to visit the school or arrange a conversation to learn more.

Warm regards,
Mary and Janet
Joint Chairs of Governors



About Willow Park C of E Primary

Willow Park is a small, diverse, and inclusive Church of England primary school located in central Bristol. The school opened in September 2021 following the merger of St Michael's on the Mount C of E Primary and St George's C of E Primary School. The school has space for 105 children and currently has 72 pupils on roll, organised into three mixed-age classes.

Over 60% of our children are eligible for free school meals, and more than 65% are from asylum-seeking families. Our children come from a wide range of cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, with a significant number having English as an additional language or joining the school mid-year.

Although we are a Church of England school, the vast majority of our pupils come from other world faiths. This gives our community a distinctive and vibrant character. We celebrate all children and families, welcoming them with love and respect, and recognising the rich contributions they bring. The school also celebrates its Christian Distinctiveness and shares close links with St Stephens Church and the local Parish.

As a School of Sanctuary, we are proud to be a safe and nurturing environment for children and families seeking refuge or new beginnings. We foster a culture of empathy and welcome, underpinned by our core Christian vision: "Be the Light". This is expressed daily through our values of Love, Inclusivity, Generosity, Hope and Tenacity.

We are supported by a small but passionate team of teachers and support staff, who are committed to improving outcomes for all children.

Recent support from The Leaf Trust has already led to improvements in behaviour, curriculum coherence and reading. There is a clear and ambitious plan in place for further development—particularly in improving the quality of teaching and learning, developing the wider curriculum, and strengthening staff expertise.

Alongside this, Willow Park will undergo a major programme of estates work to enhance the school site, learning spaces and facilities. This investment will create an inspiring and future-facing environment that reflects the ambitions we hold for our children.

"I love coming to school because I learn and play with my friends. My friends come from all over the world. We are like one big family." Willow Park Pupil

Our Improvement Journey



Willow Park was judged to require special measures in March 2024. Since then, the school has made rapid and meaningful progress. In January 2025, Ofsted recognised that "leaders have made progress to improve the school" and praised the renewed sense of purpose among staff, pupils and governors.

Key developments include:

- Clear strategic planning and phased change, avoiding staff overwhelm
- Stronger behaviour expectations, resulting in calm and focused classrooms
- Improvements to English and mathematics, particularly in phonics and early reading
- Support for pupils with English as an additional language, including targeted reading support
- Consistent approaches to curriculum and lesson structure, with better checking of pupil understanding

The school is now building its wider curriculum and refining teaching across subjects. We are looking for a leader who can build on these strong foundations and drive the next stage of improvement—particularly in strengthening the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

"Willow Park is the best! Our teachers help us with our learning and help us to show our LIGHT values."

Willow Park Pupil

Leadership Support and Mentoring



Since July 2024, Willow Park has been led by Mrs Ruth Laing, a member of The Leaf Trust's executive team. Mrs Laing has played a pivotal role in the school's recent progress, working closely with staff, governors and the wider Trust to re-establish a clear vision and embed early school improvement strategies.

Ruth will continue to lead the school until the newly appointed Headteacher takes up post. Following that, she will move into the role of School Improvement Partner, offering weekly support and guidance to the new Headteacher for at least the first year.

This provides an exceptional opportunity to step into Headship with a highly supportive, coaching-led relationship. Ruth's leadership experience and track record in school improvement make this a rare and exciting development opportunity.

About Ruth:

Ruth has served as a Headteacher and leadership mentor across three schools since 2013. Before her arrival, two of these schools had been placed in a category of special measures and were led to Good judgments within two years.

She has led school improvement, leadership and Early Years support across a wider network of schools, securing rapid improvement of standards and leadership in several schools requiring support.

Previously, Ruth worked as a Local Authority School Improvement Advisor, supporting vulnerable schools and leading county-wide projects in her specialist areas of Early Years and mathematics. She is a Local Leader of Education and a national strategies consultant for school improvement.

Ruth would be very pleased to meet potential candidates to talk more about Willow Park and what makes it such a special place to work and lead.

"Mrs Laing treats us all like family, so we treat each other like family."

Willow Park Pupil

About The Leaf Trust



"I have learnt to read and speak English. I love to read the books in our library"

Willow Park Pupil

Willow Park is in the process of joining The Leaf Trust, a highly regarded primary-only multi-academy trust serving schools in South Gloucestershire and Bristol. The Trust includes both community and Church of England schools and provides sector-leading support through its Teaching School Hub and English Hub. Leaf is a family of 14 primary schools, growing to 18 in 2026.

The Trust's vision—**Belong, Grow, Succeed**—aligns perfectly with Willow Park's ethos. Leaders across the Trust are collaborative, values-driven and committed to nurturing talent at every level.

What you can expect from The Leaf Trust:

- Coaching and mentoring for all new Headteachers
- Bespoke school improvement support
- Tailored professional development and a career pathway
- Access to a strong peer network of leaders
- Opportunities to contribute to Trust-wide improvement work
- Support in HR, finance, school improvement, SEND, and curriculum
- Strategic estates planning and support during building projects

To find out more about The Leaf Trust visit www.leaftrust.co.uk



About The Leaf Trust

The Leaf Trust is committed to ensure ALL staff feel supported through our People Plan:



We are recognised and rewarded



Long service awards



We say 'Thank you and Well done.'



Complimentary lunch with the children



We value family



A flexible and supportive approach to attending appointments and family events



A supportive and flexible approach for those with dependants



Communications policy to protect staff



We communicate well



Annual calendar: consulted and well-publicised



Single point of access for all information. Support and resources: Leaf Portal



Regular briefing sessions and staff bulletins



We each have a voice that counts



School and trust well-being committee



Regular staff surveys and shared actions



Open door policy for SLTs and the Trust executive team



We are always learning



Opportunities for career development encouraged and supported



Career pathways for all job types



Professional growth approach to performance management



We are happy and healthy



Complimentary tea, coffee and squash in the staffrooms



Gym discounts, mental health support and private healthcare discounts.



A sensible approach to workload and a growth model of observations



"Our school believes in us and helps us to show love and kindness to each other."

Willow Park Pupil

How to Apply

To find out more, visit www.willowpark.org.uk and www.leaftrust.co.uk.

To apply, please submit an application form with a supporting statement (maximum two pages, font size 11), outlining:

- Your leadership experience and impact
- Your values and educational philosophy
- How you have grown others and built capacity
- The difference your leadership has made to children's outcomes

Deadline for applications: Tuesday 6th May 2025, 12 midday

Interviews: Monday 19th and Tuesday 20th May 2025

For questions or to arrange a visit, contact office@willowpark.org.uk or call 01179 030434

Join us at Willow Park C of E Primary School—lead with heart, vision, and purpose. Together, let's shape a school that shines as a sanctuary of hope and learning.